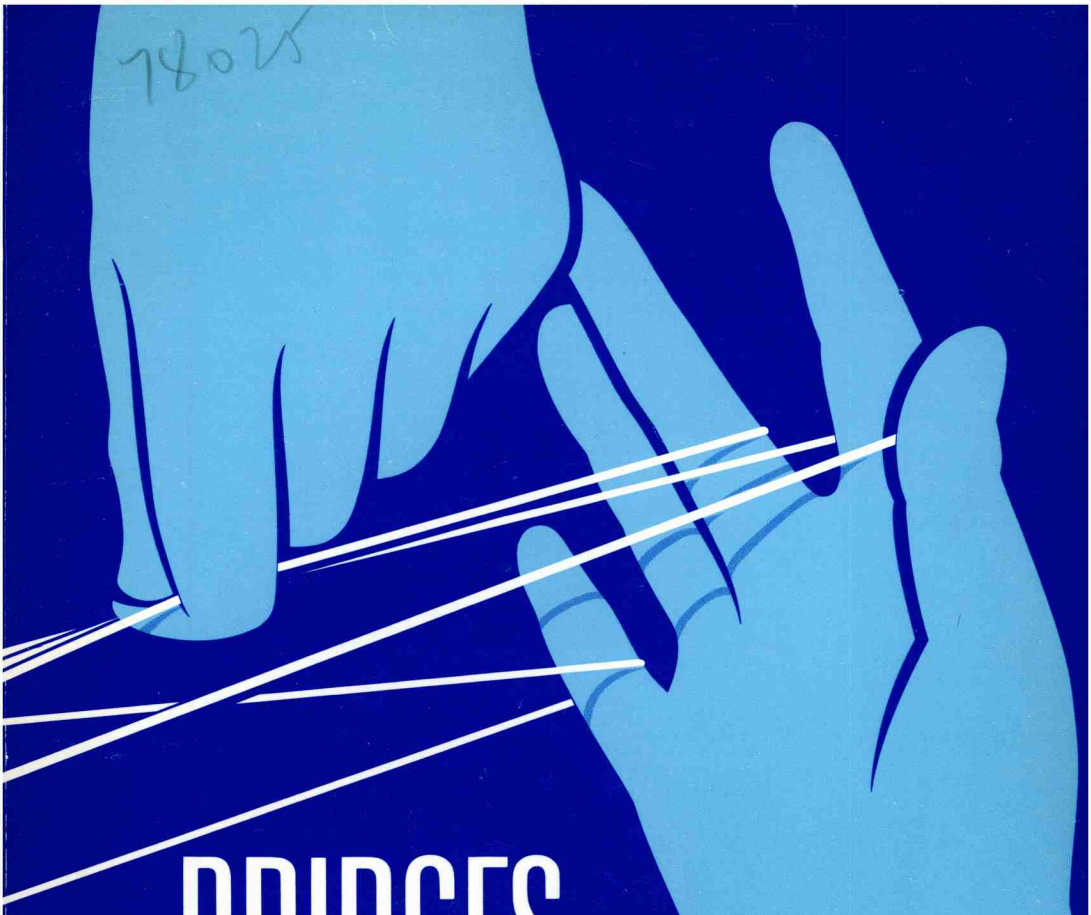

BRIDGES OF HOPE?

Canadian Voluntary Agencies and the Third World

TIM BRODHEAD • BRENT HERBERT-COPLEY
with ANNE-MARIE LAMBERT, Research Associate

THE NORTH-SOUTH INSTITUTE

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Bridges of Hope? Canadian Voluntary Agencies and the Third World
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An independent assessment by the North-South Institute.

The Institute wishes to acknowledge the generous, 'no-strings' financial assistance provided for the researching and writing of this study by the following agencies:

Alberta Agency for International Development
Canadian International Development Agency
CUSO
Aga Khan Foundation Canada
Clifford E. Lee Foundation
World University Service of Canada
Calmeadow Foundation
Canadian Organization for Development through Education
Development and Peace
Fondation Jules et Paul-Émile Léger
USC Canada
United Church of Canada
Horizons of Friendship
Inter Pares
Canadian Hunger Foundation
OXFAM-Canada
Canadian Red Cross Society
Mennonite Central Committee

The study is available directly from the North-South Institute or through booksellers at a cost of $14.00.

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The Institute is a non-profit corporation established in 1976 to provide professional, policy-relevant research on the 'North-South' issues of relations between industrialized and developing countries. The results of this research are made available to policy makers, interested groups and the general public to help generate greater understanding and informed discussion of development questions. The Institute is independent and non-partisan, and cooperates with a wide range of Canadian, overseas and international organizations working in related activities.

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Canadian Cataloguing in Publication Data

Brodhead, Tim, 1943-
Bridges of hope? : Canadian voluntary agencies and the Third World

Issued also in French under title: Ponts de l'espoir?
Bibliography: p. 157
ISBN 0-920494-72-2

1. Associations, institutions, etc., Canadian — Developing countries. 2. Economic assistance, Canadian. 3. Associations, institutions, etc. — Canada. 4. International cooperation — Societies, etc. I. Herbert-Copley, Brent, 1960- . II. North-South Institute (Ottawa, Ont.). III. Title.

HC60.B76 1988 338.91'71'01724 C88-090051-2

Editor: Moyra Tooke
Copy Editor: Rowena Cunningham
Production: Claire Paulin
Cover Design and Graphics: Edwards Design
Typesetting and Layout: Graph Comp Design

Price: $14.00

Additional copies in English or French may be ordered directly from the Institute, 55 Murray Street, Suite 200, Ottawa, Canada K1N 5M3, or from booksellers.

Bridges

There are many kinds of bridges.
There are bridges of the mind —
conceptual and philosophic bridges.
There are bridges of the heart —
bridges of love, bridges of friendship
and of the spirit.
There are bridges of vision —
bridges to the future, bridges of hope
and of promise.

The building of a bridge begins —
not from one side, but from each side.
Flexibility is a must —
a rigid bridge will not long endure.
Patience is a necessity —
for to design a lasting structure
takes time.
What makes the best foundation?
Where shall it be placed?
Why?

Nations build bridges —
forge spans to
ideas
goods
people.
People build bridges —
use bridges
are bridges
to the future.

Raymond Moriyama Architect

Source: *Annual Report 1986*, Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada, Vancouver (by permission).

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Preface

Canadians have a long tradition of voluntary action to achieve their social goals. Thinly scattered across a vast land, tested by an often inhospitable nature, Canadians have been nourished less on an ideology of aggressive individualism than on an understanding of the practical benefits of cooperation. From the Antigonish movement in the East through the Desjardins credit unions in Quebec to the diverse cooperatives of the West, Canadians have relied on themselves, on mutual assistance, for their survival and progress.

Since World War II, government has absorbed many of the traditional roles of the voluntary sector in providing social services, but voluntary action is still a pervasive factor of Canadian life. Statistics Canada reports that in 1980 there were 40,000 registered charities[1] operating in Canada, with more being created every day.

The trend in Canada reflects the reality in many industrialized countries. Ralph Kramer, in a study of voluntary agencies in the United States, Great Britain, the Netherlands and Israel, refers to a "parallel process in Western democracies of the simultaneous expansion of the public and the private sectors in the economy and in society, and a blurring of the boundaries between them";[2] a resultant 'mixed economy' in the social services makes traditional distinctions between them obsolete.

The 1980s have witnessed an apparent shrinking of the governmental role because of fiscal constraints, a mushrooming demand for social services (and consequent spiralling costs), and, at least in some instances, dissatisfaction with the quality of state-provided services. Clearly, the voluntary sector is a permanent feature of Western societies, functioning not only as a provider of services, but also as a policy advocate and educator.

In modern societies based on self-interest, with their dominant institutions organized along bureaucratic, centralized and depersonalized lines, and with individual relationships primarily regulated by contract, voluntary agencies serve a corrective function. They are oriented to meeting the needs of others, they embody the principle of collective responsibility, and they express an ideal of pluralism springing from a healthy scepticism of

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[1] Statistics Canada, "An Overview of Volunteer Workers in Canada," *The Labour Force* (May 1981).

[2] Ralph M. Kramer, *Voluntary Agencies in the Welfare State* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981), p.3.

authority. In the words of Paul Sherry, "the primary role of voluntary organizations is to continuously shape and re-shape the vision of a more just social order."[3]

Within Canada some three million people express their needs and interests and plan action through voluntary organizations which operate outside government to solve a problem, advance a cause or provide a service; voluntary agencies have been created to engage in women's interests for example, consumer protection, health care priorities, environmental and social justice issues, and the arts. All of these are non-profit organizations; most are incorporated as charitable organizations governed by boards of directors made up of volunteers. Voluntary agencies are not necessarily staffed entirely, or even in part, by volunteers: they are 'voluntary' in the sense that people choose to come together to pursue a cause or goal.

This study examines one part of the Canadian voluntary sector, those agencies working mainly or entirely in the field of international development. It excludes organizations such as labour movements, universities and colleges, and professional associations that conduct international development activities as part of a broader mandate.

In this book, the term *non-governmental organization* (NGO) refers exclusively to any voluntary, non-profit agency involved in the field of international development cooperation, or in education and policy advocacy activities related to international development. It is an awkward term and on its own reveals little. There have been periodic attempts to find a new, more positive name: in the United States, the term private voluntary organizations (PVOs) predominates, while others have suggested private development agencies (PDAs). NGO, however, has the advantage of wide acceptance not only in the United Nations' system where it originated, but also in most industrialized countries and in many regions of the Third World. While there are limitations in the term, it remains the most widely understood means of referring to voluntary agencies in the field of international development.

The Study

Over the past 15 years development NGOs have expanded their activities dramatically, with the result that as a whole they now constitute a major factor in Canada's relations with developing countries. Yet information about development agencies and their programs is lacking both in quantity and quality, consisting largely of NGO promotional materials or, occasionally, evaluations of specific agencies or activities.

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[3] Paul Sherry, "America's Third Force," *Journal of Current Issues* (July-August 1970).

In 1985 the North-South Institute launched an intensive two-year study of Canada's NGOs, both to introduce them more fully to the Canadian public and to provide more detailed evaluative material of interest to the NGOs themselves and to other development specialists.

The study has four broad objectives:

- to examine the distinctive features of the role of NGOs in international development cooperation – their relief and development assistance to Third World countries as well as their educational and advocacy work in Canada;
- to assess the effectiveness of these efforts in helping to meet development needs and in mobilizing and channelling public support for international development;
- to identify some of the strengths and weaknesses of Canadian NGOs, with a view to improving their capacity to play a positive role in overall Canadian relationships with the Third World; and
- to formulate conclusions and recommendations that will be useful to NGO planners, the government and to the broader public.

Methodology

From the outset, our goal was to arrive at general conclusions applicable, as far as possible, to the development NGO community as a whole, within a structure that recognizes the important differences among agencies. In order to do this, we organized our research around a set of broad statements which NGOs use to describe themselves and what they do.

In November 1985, following an extensive review of the literature and some preliminary interviews, we sent a questionnaire to 220 development agencies across Canada. It had two purposes: first, it elicited background information on agency programs, structures and staffing; second, it asked respondents to rate 27 statements about NGOs in terms of their applicability to their own agency.

The responses – which eventually numbered 129 (see Appendix 1) or almost 60 percent of the original sample – were then analyzed. Eleven of the statements on which there was greatest agreement formed the 'articles of faith'[4] for Canadian NGOs around which we organized our research. The 11 statements are outlined on pages 29-30.

[4] The notion of NGO 'articles of faith' was first used by Judith Tendler in a 1982 study carried out for the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). Tendler identified seven characteristics used by NGOs to describe their work: reaching the poor; participation of beneficiaries; concern with process rather than simply outcome; working on a people-to-people basis; flexibility and experimentation; support for local voluntary institutions; and low cost. See Judith Tendler, *Turning Private Voluntary Organizations into Development Agencies: Questions for Evaluation* (Aid Program Evaluation Discussion Paper No. 12), Washington, D.C., April 1982.

This approach had several advantages. First, it provided the common ground for evaluation which allowed us to profile the Canadian NGO community as a whole rather than simply its constituent parts. Second, and equally important, the approach allowed the NGOs themselves to set the themes for the study rather than having the criteria for evaluation imposed from outside. The key here is that these 11 statements are self-descriptions, reflecting how NGOs themselves perceive their role in international development.

In conducting the research we were struck by the dynamic tension between the principles which underlie all voluntary action (and which are reflected in the NGOs' articles of faith) and the need for development agencies to adapt them constantly to a rapidly changing international environment. Those basic principles are summed up in the five themes around which this report is organized and which serve as titles to the chapters in Part II.

Between March and June 1986, the research team undertook six field trips of approximately one month each, covering seven countries in all: Bangladesh, Burkina Faso, Haiti, Jamaica, Mali, Peru and Zimbabwe. Canadian voluntary development agencies support a wide range of activities in each of these countries, and the team made an attempt to cover the work of a representative sample differing in programming styles, sectors and project sizes. In all, the research team visited 51 projects supported by Canadian NGOs (Appendix 2), and held further interviews with representatives of indigenous NGOs, national government officials and Canadian Embassy staff in the area. Within Canada, we also interviewed a cross-section of 31 NGOs that support development education programs for Canadians (Appendix 3), and a wide range of other participants in (and observers of) the voluntary development community.

Our research was designed to profile the broad range of Canadian NGO activities rather than provide in-depth analysis of a few individual agencies or projects. Therefore, we chose representative rather than random sampling for both overseas visits and in-Canada interviews, and balanced first-hand research with a variety of secondary source materials. The majority of projects visited overseas were either actually in progress or only recently completed; while this may have made generalizations about the long-term impact of projects more difficult, we saw it as crucial to understanding how development projects work, rather than just what they had or had not achieved.

Organization of the Report

This report is structured around the research criteria we have described – the NGOs' self-descriptions or articles of faith. In other words, rather than focusing on specific activities, such as relief, development projects, and

development education, we have tried to evaluate the validity of the broad characteristics claimed by a majority of NGOs to give them a unique role in the development field. These characteristics were identified through responses to our questionnaire, modified in the light of other concerns expressed in interviews with NGO representatives.

Part I of the report provides a brief introduction to the Canadian NGO community, looking both at its evolution over the past decades and its current status. Part II, the main evaluative section of the report, assesses the validity of the central NGO self-perceptions which we have linked to five enduring principles underlying all voluntary activity. These linked principles are:

- altruism (NGOs respond to the needs of others);
- autonomy (NGOs are distinctive from and independent of governments);
- participation (NGOs provide channels for Canadians to participate in international development);
- efficiency (NGOs' mobilize and use resources in a cost-effective fashion); and
- cooperation (NGOs have unique relationships with beneficiary communities).

Part III of the report evaluates perhaps the single most important argument for NGOs' unique role in development and the most important determinant of their future effectiveness: their capacity for innovation and flexibility as they respond to a rapidly changing development environment.

On Being Critical

Throughout this report, while some specific positive or negative examples are cited, we have chosen on the whole not to refer to agencies and projects by name, particularly in our analysis of what we perceive as failures. We felt that to name agencies would single some out for praise or criticism and reduce the incentive for others to apply that critical assessment to their own work. It is for the same reason that the report treats the voluntary development community in broad terms rather than focusing on the structure and activities of a few individual agencies.

Our research has been guided both by our faith in the uniqueness and potential of the Canadian non-governmental development community, and our understanding that faith does not obviate the need for criticism. The criteria for this research – the self-descriptions outlined above – set high standards for NGOs. If the tone of the report is overly critical, it is because we take small successes for granted and concentrate instead on the broader challenges that NGOs must face.

As in any undertaking of this scope, the final product is the result of the hard work and encouragement of many individuals and institutions. In the first place, we are indebted to our financial sponsors, governmental and non-governmental, who saw the value of an in-depth, independent assessment of Canadian NGOs. Research assistance was provided by Maureen Hollingworth and Fielding Yost, and an advisory committee (Jean Brodeur, Mardele Harland, Marc Laporte, Pat Mooney, James Morrison, Betty Plewes, Raymond ven der Buhs, Bob Vokey and John Wieler) met several times to review work and offer suggestions for improvement. We are also grateful to the staff of the North-South Institute, particularly Roger Young, Bernard Wood and Maxwell Brem, and to our editor, Moyra Tooke. Finally, a note of thanks is due to the many individuals and agencies in Canada and abroad who responded to our questionnaire, answered our questions, and allowed us to visit their projects. Their candor, patience and insight have been crucial to our work.

Part I

The Voluntary Development Community in Canada

1 The Evolution of the Canadian Voluntary Development Community

Canadian voluntary development agencies were active in what is now called the Third World long before government. Canadians were engaged in missionary work overseas before the turn of the century; the first Canadian official aid program dates only from the Colombo Plan of the early 1950s.

In the years following World War II a number of refugee and relief agencies were created in Canada, often to serve as fundraising branches of European or American organizations (e.g., CARE, OXFAM, Foster Parents Plan). The final burst of decolonization in the 1960s saw the setting up of agencies like CUSO/SUCO to send volunteers to the emerging nations. International cooperation moved away from its missionary origins and became 'secularized', and a large number of Canadian voluntary development agencies were established. Many of the Canadian branches of foreign organizations became more independent and some, such as OXFAM and the Canadian Save the Children Fund (CANSAVE), loosened or severed their links with their parent bodies.

In fact, the 1960s represented the coming of age of the voluntary development community in Canada. The creation of the Canadian Council for International Cooperation (CCIC) was the first step toward inter-agency cooperation and was followed in the 1970s by the founding of a number of provincial coordinating councils.

In the 1960s also, the Canadian government began to give direct financial support to development NGOs. Canada was one of the first western aid-giving countries to establish a program specifically to support the involvement of its citizens in international development by matching private donations to voluntary development agencies. In 1968, the federal Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) set up a Non-Governmental Organizations division with the mandate to promote citizen participation in development activities, provide development assistance to emerging nations through non-governmental channels (by means of matching grants), and tap the expertise and resources of the non-governmental sector for development purposes. CIDA recognized the importance of exempting the voluntary sector from the sort of constraints imposed on government-to-government aid, such as tying aid to expenditures on Canadian goods and services, country and sector priorities, and the need to obtain prior approval from a host country govern-

ment (although NGO proposals are routinely cleared through the Canadian mission in the country concerned). In 1981, CIDA's matching grant program was re-organized to include responsibility for the participation of universities, colleges, unions, professional associations, and cooperatives; many of the large volunteer-sending NGOs were transferred to a separate program, the Institutional Cooperation and Development Services (ICDS) divison.

In its first year, the NGO division disbursed some $5 million to 50 development projects carried out by 20 agencies. By the mid-1980s, matching funds were being provided to almost 200 agencies in support of 2,400 projects. Nor is support restricted to NGO division/ICDS channels; development agencies also received funding from the matching grants programs of several provincial governments (though in recent years, these programs have been in decline). CIDA's International Humanitarian Assistance (IHA) division funds relief and recovery projects and, increasingly, the bilateral division of CIDA offers a number of special funding arrangements for NGOs. Indeed, it is a paradox that within Canada the single dominant presence on the non-governmental scene since the late 1960s has been the federal government. Government funding, policies and procedures for NGOs, more than any other single factor, have determined the pattern of Canadian NGO activity. On the whole, it has been a rather benign, non-coercive influence, though not without its conflicts.

In the 1960s also, there was a surge of energy and resolve among development workers. Trudeau's 'just society' liberalism, the return to Canada of CUSO/SUCO and other agency volunteers now sensitized to the interrelationships of Third World poverty and global economic and political structures, and intellectual influences ranging from liberation theology to the works of Paolo Freire, André Gunder Frank, and Ivan Illich, created a critical mass of Canadians anxious to "bring the message back home." In the words of Jean Christie,

> . . . they realized that meaningful development would require a distribution of power as well as of resources; that it would have to deal with trade as well as aid; that it would necessitate a revamping of unjust structures and relationships – between nations and within nations . . . they realized that global changes would require changes in Canada: in attitudes, actions and structures.[1]

Partly in response to these pressures, though perhaps more directly motivated by a wish to increase public support for Canada's aid program, CIDA launched a matching grant scheme for development education, called the Public Participation Program (PPP). PPP was a pioneering

[1] Jean Christie, "A Critical History of Development Education in Canada," *Canadian and International Education*, 12:3 (1983), p.9.

venture in government support for autonomous citizens' groups to play a role in public education and policy advocacy. Although the level of financial support has always been a fraction of that given to overseas projects, it was crucial to some of the early steps in creating a development education community in Canada – such as the funding of regionally-based animators through the Development Education Animators Program (DEAP) in the early 1970s, or the 1972 tour of the mobile learner centre, which spread the work and experience of the London Learner Centre (originally set up by CUSO), and thus laid the groundwork for a national network of community-based educational groups. Local development education programming has been supplemented by a number of national programs, often carried out by agencies that also work overseas.

Changes in Development Theory and Practice

A review of the key events of NGO history tells only part of the story. The shifting pattern of values, concepts and theories over the years provides the best clues as to the nature of Canadian voluntary development agencies and their potential for evolution.

Development agencies serve three functions: the first is meeting human needs in poor countries; the second is stimulating awareness and support for international development among the Canadian public; and the third is promoting public policies conducive to the creation of a more just and equitable world order. Although not all agencies embrace all of these goals, and some focus on one to the exclusion of the others, there is a widespread recognition that all are legitimate and necessary activities for NGOs. Over time, however, the balance between these functions has shifted, and the nature of the specific development programs that serve them has changed dramatically. To some extent, this reflects changes in how people have come to understand 'development'.

In the post-World War II era, it was widely assumed that 'development' was synonymous with 'modernization', a basically imitative and automatic process in the course of which poor countries would become more and more like industrialized ones. Economist W. Arthur Lewis likened the process of development to a snowball: "Once the snowball starts to move downhill, it will move of its own momentum, and will get bigger and bigger as it goes along." Development theory, as such, only came into being when it became clear that the snowball was not rolling downhill, that development was not happening. A succession of schools of thought about development then came into vogue, each contributing new ideas and analysis.

Dependency theory asserted that the major obstacles to development are external, embedded in exploitative trade and other exchanges whereby the centre systematically appropriates the surplus produced by the pe-

riphery. *Basic needs theory* arose from the failure of trickle-down concepts of growth, leading development practitioners (notably the World Bank) to target the poor for such essential services as clean water, sanitation, health and education. The notion of *interdependence*, argued forcefully in the 1980 Brandt Report, highlighted the transnationalization of economies and linked an increase in the purchasing power of the poor developing nations to a re-launching of economic growth in the industrialized world, to the benefit of each.

NGOs, while influenced to some extent by these differing strands in development theory, pursued an approach rooted in their own ethical and philanthropic traditions and conditioned by their position as outsiders – bit players in terms of resources and power. They adopted from the beginning a resolutely 'grass-roots' approach, not necessarily or solely because of any immunity from the supposed paternalism or assumptions of cultural and technological superiority often attributed to aid givers, but because of practical limitations imposed by small budgets and staff, and uncertain funding. Consequently, they preferred small-scale, often isolated or even scattered projects; they sought a contribution from the indigenous community, both to demonstrate community support and to keep costs low; and they encouraged local initiative in originating projects, both because their own management tended to be somewhat loose and because, over time, confident and trusting relationships developed between 'donors' and 'recipients'.

In the period before 1970 NGOs, by and large, shared the dominant faith of the postwar era that progress could be equated with economic growth: development was a relatively linear process of adoption of Western values and technology. This belief was reflected in their programs, emphasizing direct assistance to individuals and families in need. Material assistance, child and family sponsorship, and emergency relief were the order of the day. Development education and advocacy, to the extent they existed at all, centred on providing factual information about the Third World, and on building public support for the aid program in general and NGOs in particular.

By the mid-1970s, faith in this approach began to be challenged on several fronts. First, economic progress in the industrialized world faltered under the shocks of the oil price rise, stagflation, soaring unemployment and shifting patterns of economic production. People returning from working in Third World countries joined others in asking whether the Western industrial model, greedy in its demands on cheap energy and the environment, was sustainable for the West itself, let alone viable for the rest of the globe. Second, people in Third World countries began to form producer cooperatives, peasant associations, and a variety of formal and informal community-based self-help groups – and to demand a greater say in what the objectives of development were to be and the

means by which they could be attained. And finally, NGOs themselves came to recognize that in the face of an exploding population and the sheer magnitude of human needs, an approach based on taking care of one child at a time could not begin to master the myriad factors contributing to human misery and impoverishment.

As a result, NGOs began to shift the objectives of their overseas programming toward longer-term development, emphasizing small, self-contained projects, appropriate technology, and efforts to organize and animate local communities in order to strengthen capacities for self-reliance.

This change toward a developmental approach overseas was paralleled by an evolution in educational work at home in Canada. The straightforward dissemination of information about the Third World began to be replaced by a more critical analysis of structural causes of underdevelopment and the inter-relationships between North and South. In the 1970s much of the most innovative education and policy advocacy was conducted simultaneously on specific local community concerns and on major international issues: trade, food, jobs, and the implications of a new international economic order. 'Think globally, act locally' was the watchword of the times. In their advocacy work, as well, agencies began to concentrate on mobilizing public opinion against Northern trade and aid policies which they saw as injurious to the type of development they favoured.

Today the process of change continues. In the mid- and late-1980s, a further evolution is leading NGOs toward a new "strategic" orientation[2] that promises profound changes in the way NGOs operate. NGOs' history has always been in the active voice, as 'doers'. But now their counterparts in the South – inevitably – are taking this role on for themselves. As always, the shift is neither automatic nor painless. NGOs, historically the activists of development, must now adapt to changes in the international development community. Indigenous self-reliance, preached for so long by Northern benefactors, is becoming a reality, not in the sense of autarchy (an increasingly irrelevant concept in an era of 'world product mandates' and global communications) but in the sense of a new division of labour in the international NGO community. At the same time, Canadian NGOs are also changing their approach to their other missions – development education and advocacy – as the limitations of past policies become increasingly apparent. The chapters which follow chart these developments and their implications for Canadian NGOs.

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[2] David C. Korten, "Micro-Policy Reform: The Role of Private Voluntary Development Agencies" (Working Paper No. 12), National Association of Schools of Public Affairs and Administration, Washington, D.C., 8 August 1986.

Although NGO approaches and activities have shifted over the years, there remains an essential self-defining core to which all development NGOs aspire: altruistic in motivation, independent in status, participatory in structure and methodology, respectful of the rights and dignity of individuals and collectivities, and capable of mobilizing resources effectively. The ultimate test of NGOs' flexibility and innovativeness (and hence their effectiveness) lies in their capacity to harness these principles to effective action in a constantly changing environment, strategically using their limited resources to bring about real change in the search for a more just and humane world. It is this tension between continuity – in principles, values and beliefs – and change in the environment for NGO work, and the methods adopted to deal with this environment, which provides the context for NGO activity and for this study.

2 The Canadian Voluntary Development Community Today

Despite occasional media coverage and a barrage of fundraising appeals, most Canadians know relatively little about voluntary development agencies. Even individuals who support a particular organization seldom know much about its programs. Some agencies, of course, are well known, and a few – CUSO, CARE, the Red Cross or the Jules and Paul-Emile Léger Foundation – are familiar names,[1] but broader knowledge of the structures and activities of the voluntary development community as a whole is almost non-existent.

This chapter provides a profile of NGOs through analyzing their structures, activities and the environment in which they work. For the most part, the profile is based on information gathered in 1986 from responses to a questionnaire completed by 129 executive directors (or equivalent representatives) of Canadian NGOs representing a good cross-section of the Canadian development community.

Who Are the NGOs?

This study, as noted in the preface, is confined to those voluntary agencies whose primary activity is international development. Some 220 Canadian development agencies, of widely different origins, sizes and purposes, fit this definition. In terms of annual operating budgets for example, respondents range from World Vision Canada and World University Service Canada (WUSC), with annual budgets each over $25 million, to the Christian Farmers Federation of Alberta and the Comité de solidarité Tiers Monde, whose combined budgets in 1984-85 added up to less than $100,000. Of the 97 agencies that provided financial information, 36 percent had a 1984 budget of less than $250,000, 24 percent between $250,000 and $1 million, 24 percent between $1 million and $5 million, and 16 percent over $5 million.

Despite this diversity it is possible to make some broad generalizations about Canadian NGOs.

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[1] A 1980 opinion poll, carried out for CIDA by Adcom Research Ltd., reveals some interesting results. Respondents were asked to name agencies working in the field of international development. Not surprisingly, long-established NGOs were relatively well known, ranging as high as 27 percent of all respondents in the case of the Red Cross (compared to only 6 percent for CIDA). On the other hand, only seven agencies (Red Cross, UNICEF, CARE, churches, OXFAM, CUSO and the Salvation Army) were mentioned by more than 5 percent of respondents nationally. See Adcom Research Ltd. *A Report On Canadians' Attitudes Toward Foreign Aid* (Hull: CIDA, November 1980), p. 53.

First, despite the importance of religion and missionary work in the early days, most Canadian development NGOs – 72 percent – could be defined as secular, only 13 percent as 'religious but non-denominational', and 14 percent as 'denominational'. The province of Quebec is somewhat of an exception in that there are still a large number of agencies of religious origin. Even here, as Gabrielle Lachance[2] has noted, the 'secularization' of Quebec society since 1945 has meant that traditional missionary work is increasingly called into question. Many agencies have either moved away from their church roots, or have relegated pastoral work and proselytization to secondary importance.

Moreover, unlike NGOs in some countries in Western Europe (for example, the Netherlands), Canadian NGOs do not split along religious lines: a large number of inter-church committees and working groups span the Christian denominations; the national NGO umbrella group – CCIC – and its provincial counterparts, include both religious and secular groups.

A second general observation concerns the proportion and importance of foreign-based agencies to overall Canadian NGO activity. As was mentioned in Chapter 1, many of the Canadian agencies founded before 1960 were essentially branches of foreign (usually British or American) NGOs, including Foster Parents Plan, CARE, OXFAM, and Save the Children Fund, to name just a few. Even in Quebec, where language might be assumed to be a barrier, five of seven organizations formed before 1960 were of foreign origin.[3] Over the years, the relative importance of foreign control decreased, as some agencies (for example, OXFAM-Canada and CANSAVE) became independent of their former head offices, and as an increasing number of indigenous Canadian agencies sprang up. In fact, the balance has now clearly swung away from foreign-based agencies: only 12 percent of agencies founded since 1971 channel the funds they raise to an international parent or affiliate, compared with 46 percent of those formed in the period 1946-1960. Figure 2.1 illustrates the declining importance of foreign-based NGOs.

Nonetheless, local affiliates of foreign-based agencies still make up a sizeable portion of the Canadian NGO community: fully 25 percent of agencies responding to the questionnaire are linked to a foreign head office (while formally, of course, responsible to an independent Canadian board of directors). The role of the Canadian branches has primarily been that of fundraisers: they are among the most efficient in the entire Canadian NGO community, often surpassing the per capita fundraising ability of the parent organization. Some of them, such as World Vision

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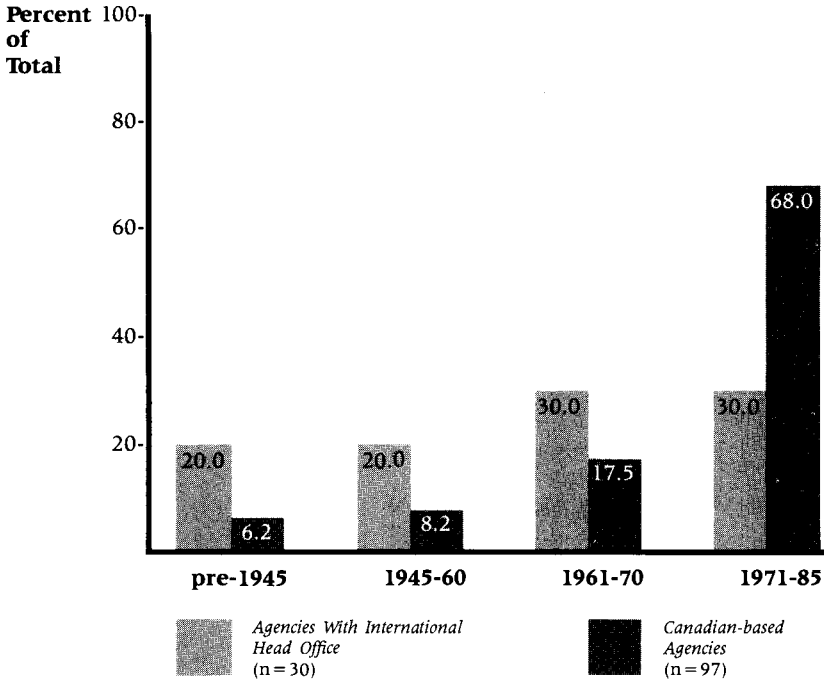
[2] Gabrielle Lachance, "La coopération au développement: le point de vue des organisations non-gouvernementales québécoises," *Revue Canadienne d'Études du Développement/Canadian Journal of Development Studies*, vol. VII, no. 1 (1986), pp. 124-125.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 118.

Figure 2.1

Date of Founding of Questionnaire Respondents



Canada, CARE Canada and Foster Parents Plan of Canada, are among the largest recipients of Canadian private and public funds. Foreign-based agencies, however, pay less attention to other aspects of development work: for instance, they are usually not engaged in development education except for brief donor newsletters, even though parent agencies are in some cases moving increasingly in this direction. And while a few, such as CARE Canada, have taken steps to increase their role in development programming, agency head offices are usually responsible for operations in the Third World. There is, of course, a certain logic in this sort of centralization. For example, Foster Parents Plan International, located in Rhode Island, U.S.A., has a large staff working on planning, programming and evaluation, and is thus able to develop far more expertise than its national branches. For the Canadian offices, however, specialization has meant that programming expertise has developed slowly, if at all. As will be noted in Chapter 3, this poses problems, particularly in areas such as emergency relief.

A third generalization is that although NGOs are located in all regions of Canada, their distribution is uneven. As Figure 2.2 shows, just over half of all agencies that responded to our questionnaire are in Ontario, while only two respondents (1.6 percent) are from Atlantic Canada. The disparity in relative size and scope of programs is even more striking. Most of the large, national NGOs are based in Ontario; however, Ontario has surprisingly few local and regional agencies, most of which are concentrated in Quebec and the Prairies. The strength of the local voluntary sector in these regions should come as no surprise. The Prairies in particular have a strong tradition of voluntary action, reflected in higher-than-average rates of charitable donations and a higher level of volunteer work than in many other provinces.[4] Development education has flourished on the Prairies, with learner centres playing a key role in both urban and rural areas. Quebec has, logically, developed its own regional community because many national organizations have no francophone presence: some of these regional agencies have cultivated a broader constituency, particularly among French-speaking Canadians living outside Quebec.

What Do NGOs Do?

As noted earlier, NGO work falls into three broad categories: overseas projects and programs, development education and public policy advocacy. These encompass, however, a wide range of activities and approaches. For example, we visited projects that ranged from agricultural extension work in Bangladesh to handicraft production and marketing in Peru, and the production of breakfast cereal in Jamaica. A comparable variety of activities and approaches exists in development education and advocacy work.

Overseas Activities

As a result of the NGOs' slow but steady evolution toward a more integrated developmental approach to issues of poverty and underdevelopment, welfare activities – the provision of material assistance (clothing, medical supplies) or the sponsoring of children and families – have declined in relative importance. Current NGO work is clearly a mix of welfare and development, as Figure 2.3 shows. Similarly, although emergency relief is still an important (and highly visible) activity for many agencies, the emphasis on longer-term development work is increasing.

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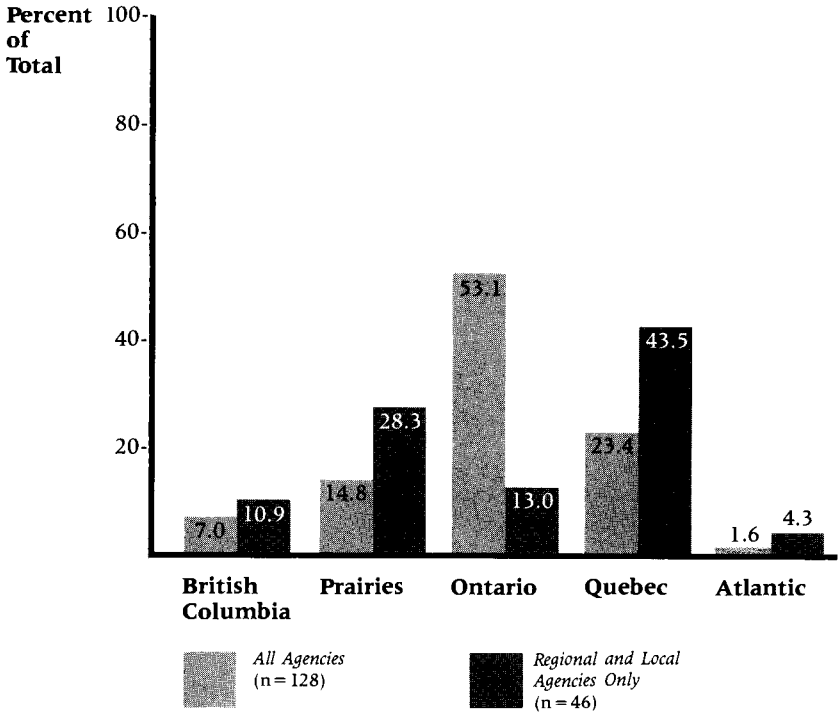
[4] A 1984 Gallup poll, for example, found that per capita donations to charity were higher in the Prairies than in any other region, and that the incidence of volunteer work in the 12 months preceding the survey was highest in the Prairies and British Columbia. See Canadian Gallup Poll Ltd., *Financial Support for Non-Profit Organizations 1984: A Study of the Behaviour and Attitudes of Canadians. Narrative Report.* November 1984, pp. 44, 99.

Figure 2.2

Distribution of Questionnaire Respondents by Region

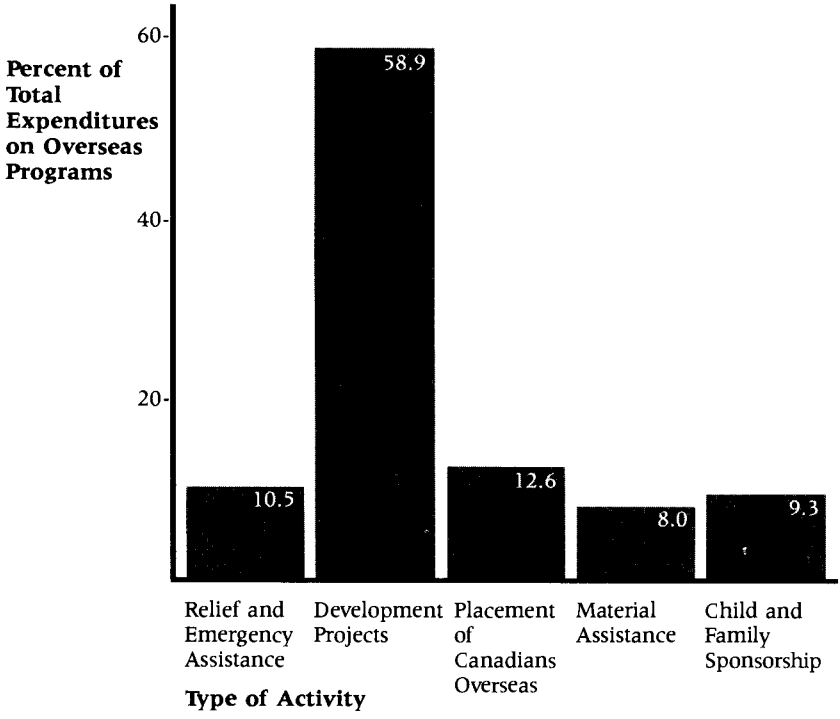


This shift from welfare to development has led agencies to adopt a 'project-centred' approach. Instead of the relatively straightforward donation of financial or material resources to indigenous Third World groups or individuals, most overseas work now consists of distinct projects designed to carry out specific activities within a given period of time. Even agencies with substantial sponsorship programs, such as Foster Parents Plan, generally carry out sponsorship within the framework of a broader community development project. This change has been given impetus by the increasing levels of CIDA funding to NGOs and CIDA's demands for accountability and measurement of outputs, which are easier to meet within a project format.

Increasingly, however, NGOs are beginning to realize the limitations of an approach stressing small, self-contained projects, no matter how effectively managed. As pressures mount to demonstrate broader development impact, NGOs are moving toward the support of more integrated

Figure 2.3

Distribution of Overseas Activities of 'Average' Questionnaire Respondent



Source: Questionnaire responses. Figures are raw averages, which do not take into account the relative sizes of various agencies. Development education and in-Canada administrative expenses are excluded.

development programs. Local indigenous partners, meanwhile, are pressing Canadian agencies to provide not just funds for specific projects, but core funding for ongoing operations. CIDA, for its part, is moving more and more toward funding programs rather than projects, and providing multi-year funding for established NGOs, at least partially in order to decrease its own administrative costs. In 1985-86, fully two-thirds of CIDA's NGO division disbursements were in the form of multi-year or program grants. But in spite of this shift, the development project remains the primary unit of operation for NGOs, as for most other donors.

In terms of geographical distribution, NGOs' overseas activities are fairly evenly spread among regions (see Table 2.1). Since the inception of CIDA's

NGO program in 1968, the percentage of disbursements going to Africa has increased markedly, while Asia's share has fallen. Latin America and the Caribbean still receive a large share of total disbursements; to a certain degree, this reflects Canada's historical ties with the Commonwealth Caribbean, which, given its small population, receives a disproportionate share of both NGO and government-to-government assistance. Despite the increased emphasis on Africa, it is important to note that the activities of Canadian NGOs are not focused exclusively on the poorest countries. In 1984-85, just over one-third of CIDA's NGO and ICDS divisions disbursements to NGOs went to the 31 countries designated by the United Nations as 'least developed' – a figure not appreciably different from the percentage of total Canadian government-to-government aid going to these countries. NGOs focus their work on poverty alleviation at a 'micro' (rather than national) level. Priorities are set not just by need but by historical ties, availability of funding, and familiarity with local partners; as a result GNP per capita is a poor predictor of the level of NGO activity in a given country.

What is the nature of NGO projects? Table 2.2 provides a breakdown by sector of projects funded by CIDA's NGO and ICDS divisions in 1985-86. As can be seen, 'social' projects, particularly in the fields of education and health, predominate. Projects centred on agriculture and food production account for a slightly smaller percentage of disbursements, while other non-farm productive activities represent only a small portion of total NGO activities.[5] The table also shows the large percentage of total disbursements that are essentially multi-sectoral in nature ('institutional support and management', 'economic and financial support'). To some degree, this is merely an accounting convenience, since development projects are often difficult to catalogue by sector, but it also represents the growing tendency among NGOs to work in an integrated fashion, and in some cases to move beyond specific projects toward program support for institutions and groups.

One final point should be made regarding NGOs' role in overseas projects. The dominant public image, influenced by such high profile groups as CUSO, is that of Canadians – often volunteers – working hand-in-hand with Third World citizens on development projects, in schools, health clinics, or rice paddies. In reality, this kind of direct operational role

[5] Unlike NGOs in the United States, Canadian agencies are not heavily involved in the support of small-scale, informal sector entrepreneurs. A 1984 report for CIDA, for example, concluded that with a few exceptions, Canadian NGOs have relatively little capacity (and often only lukewarm interest) in developing small-scale credit programs for micro-enterprises, a conclusion supported by our own field work. See Robert Mitchell and Francine Trempe, *Canadian NGOs and Small Scale Enterprise Development: An Analysis of Present Capabilities and Future Potential* (Hull: CIDA, November 1984). Where NGOs are involved in such income-generating activities, it often takes place within a multi-sectoral community development program and, as a result, does not show up in statistics.

Table 2.1

NGO and ICDS Division Disbursements by Region[a]

	1969-70	1974-75	1979-80	1984-85
Asia	40.0	39.4	28.5	25.7
Anglophone Africa	11.7	15.9	22.1	21.0
Francophone Africa	3.3	13.3	16.1	15.2
Latin America and Caribbean	45.0	31.4	33.3	38.0
TOTAL	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**

[a] Excluding all disbursements not allocable by country (e.g., multi-regional, in-Canada, PPP); previous to 1977-78 – disbursements to several large cooperant-placement agencies (CUSO, CESO, CWY) were also not allocable by country or region.

Source: CIDA, Evaluation Division, Policy Branch, "Evaluation Assessment of the NGO Program: Volume 1, Program Profile" Draft, Hull, May 1983, Table 3; additional data supplied by Special Programs Branch, CIDA.

Table 2.2

Sectoral Breakdown of NGO and ICDS Division Disbursements, 1985-86
($ millions of current year)

	NGO	ICDS	Total
Health, Nutrition and Population (including water and sanitation)	22.0 (34.2%)	3.7 (6.1%)	25.7 (20.6%)
Education and Human Resource Development	9.3 (14.5%)	26.3 (43.6%)	35.6 (28.6%)
Agriculture and Food Production	9.4 (14.6%)	13.9 (23.1%)	23.3 (18.7%)
Institutional Support and Management	2.8 (4.4%)	15.1 (25.0%)	17.9 (14.4%)
Economic and Financial Support	16.8 (26.1%)	— —	16.8 (13.5%)
Other Production (energy, forestry, industry, mines, fisheries)	1.5 (2.3%)	0.9 (1.5%)	2.4 (1.9%)
Other Non-production (communications, transportation)	0.3 (0.5%)	0.1 (0.2%)	0.4 (0.3%)
Unknown	2.2 (3.4%)	0.4 (0.7%)	2.6 (2.1%)
TOTAL	**64.3 (100.0%)**	**60.3 (100.0%)**	**124.6 (100.0%)**

Source: Adapted from information supplied by Special Programs Branch, CIDA.

represents only a small part of NGO work overseas. In a given country, NGOs may be active in a variety of ways. In Peru, to take one example, a few Canadian agencies, such as CUSO, WUSC, CANSAVE, or les Ailes de l'Espérance, have their own field personnel (both Canadian and locally-engaged staff) responsible for planning, monitoring and implementing projects. Other agencies, such as CARE Canada or the Canadian UNICEF Committee, work through international affiliates, with the Canadian role of these agencies in Peru primarily that of funder, with less responsibility for planning or monitoring. Finally, a large number of Canadian NGOs channel funds via local Peruvian NGOs; this is the case, for example, for the Canadian Catholic Organization for Development and Peace (CCODP), OXFAM-Canada, the Léger Foundation, the Inter-Church Fund for International Development (ICFID), MATCH International, or the Canadian Hunger Foundation (CHF). In this situation, the extent of Canadian involvement in planning and evaluation can vary widely, depending on the relationship built up between the Canadian and local NGO. In some cases local control is almost complete: CCODP, for example, even entrusted evaluation of its Peru program to a local agency, the Centro de Estudios y Promoción del Desarrollo (DESCO), with only periodic Canadian input.

In recent years, there has been some increase in direct Canadian NGO involvement overseas. Expanded CIDA funding has allowed some agencies such as WUSC and the Canadian Centre for International Studies and Cooperation (CECI) to build a greater direct project implementation capacity. At the same time, there has been a decrease in the importance of international affiliates. At least in part as a response to CIDA pressure to 'Canadianize' their operations, some foreign-based agencies have begun to delegate some programming responsibility to the Canadian offices: CARE Canada, for example, has been designated 'lead agency' in several countries where CARE works, giving it prime responsibility for planning and monitoring. In the longer term, however, it appears to be the third strategy, i.e., working via indigenous NGOs, which is gaining ground.

Development Education

In terms of total budget, development education remains a small part of the work of the NGO community: in 1984-85, CIDA/PPP disbursements represented perhaps 3 percent of total ODA funds channelled to NGOs. Other measures, however, indicate that the importance of development education is substantially larger than this. Staffing figures, for example, show that over 10 percent of NGOs' total staff work specifically on development education, and this percentage has increased since 1975. Questionnaire data reveals that 77 percent of respondents do some development education, and 20 percent are exclusively involved in this work.

The term 'development education' has always been difficult to define, but broadly speaking it encompasses at least three categories of activities which, while often lumped together, have distinct goals and desired outcomes:

Information: Much of what is called development education is actually the straightforward dissemination of factual information about Third World countries, or about the activities of NGOs, through agency newsletters, donor reports, sponsorship updates, etc.. For many large fundraising agencies, this is the only form of development education in which they are involved, and its primary objective is fundraising or constituency building. Some NGOs, however, are trying to convert traditional newsletters into more effective tools of education.

Education: For most development education groups, education implies more than the mere provision of factual information. Development education must be a critical, analytical process of reflection upon that information. Examples of this type of work vary widely, from the Common Heritage Programme's design of teaching materials for Canadian schools, to a Third World film festival and lecture series organized by the Edmonton Learner Centre.

Advocacy: Finally, much development education is geared to encouraging specific action by the public. This can take a variety of forms, from lobbying politicians to public campaigns to raise awareness of specific issues, such as the infant formula boycott organized by NGOs from Canada and other countries, or the campaign against war toys by the Association québécoise des organismes de coopération internationale (AQOCI) and other Quebec NGOs.

These categories, it should be noted, are not watertight compartments – one agency may well be involved in all three categories, and a given activity might, for example, aim at both education and advocacy. And while there is a progression of sorts implicit in this scheme (advocacy should be based upon education, which in turn demands reliable information) it is not intended to suggest a ranking of the effectiveness of activities, but rather to recognize that development education has a number of different objectives, and that different means to achieve these are appropriate – and, by implication, different standards of assessment must be applied.

Much of Canadian NGO development education takes place at the local level, through learner centres and other community-based groups, but there are a number of national programs, run by agencies such as the YMCA, OXFAM-Canada and CUSO. One such national program is run by the inter-church body Ten Days for World Development which works through local parishes and church groups.

The Umbrella Organizations

There is a constant tension in the NGO community between agencies' desire to preserve their individualism, and their recognition of the practical benefits of cooperation. The very diversity of NGOs makes coordinating activities difficult. Over the years, a variety of coordinating structures and networks have evolved, both in Canada and in the field.

At the national level, Canadian NGO activities are coordinated by the Canadian Council for International Cooperation based in Ottawa. The council has over 110 institutional members from across the country, comprising both development agencies and those specializing in development education. Its mandate has evolved over the years, but now focuses on a mixture of service to members, representation and defence of NGO interests, and promotion of information-sharing among NGOs. In the area of overseas cooperation, for example, CCIC channels information to members on current issues and trends, and provides a contact point with their counterparts in other countries. It also administers a Rehabilitation and Reconstruction Fund, which approves post-disaster projects for CIDA funding. In the field of government relations, CCIC monitors government policy and engages in advocacy work on behalf of the NGO community. Much of CCIC's work takes place via inter-agency working groups, organized along geographic lines (Francophone Africa, Southern Africa, Latin America) or functional lines (development and disarmament, women and development, and microtechnology). Again, these groups promote networking and information-sharing among agencies with similar interests, and also organize more specific activities (e.g., a national conference on Canada and South Africa; follow-up to the UN's Nairobi conference on women). CCIC also has regional committees in British Columbia, the Prairies, Ontario, Quebec and the Atlantic provinces: these committees provide a forum for interaction and information-sharing on a provincial/regional basis, and are particularly oriented to development education.[6]

In addition to CCIC, there are also NGO provincial councils in four provinces. The oldest of these are in Manitoba and Saskatchewan. Originally set up to administer provincial government matching grants schemes, they have gradually taken on new activities, particularly in the coordination of development education activities, and in provincially-based advocacy. More recently, reductions in provincial funding of NGOs have decreased the importance of the funding role somewhat. AQOCI, founded in 1976, has several areas of activity, dealing with overseas cooperation, development education and government relations. The newest of the councils is DECCA, the Development Education Coordinat-

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[6] For more information, see Coopérative d'Animation et de Consultation, *Evaluation of CCIC: Final Report*, Montreal, September 1984.

ing Council of Alberta. Unlike the others, its role is solely in the field of development education, and its membership is limited to those agencies with education programs. DECCA was born out of a split between development education and overseas agencies in Alberta, which led to the demise of the Alberta Council for International Cooperation (which was similar in membership and structure to its Manitoba and Saskatchewan counterparts).[7]

In recent years, a number of more focused forms of inter-agency cooperation have been created. There are now a number of regionally-based groups – South Asia Partnership – Canada, Solidarité Canada Sahel, Partnership Africa Canada – becoming involved in joint planning, project selection, and even, in some cases, programming. In the development education field as well, specialized agencies are being created, including the Learner Centres Association of Ontario, and the Manitoba-based Agencies for International Development Education (AIDE), which bring together groups working with the formal education system. As will be pointed out in Chapter 6, inter-agency coordination, whether in Canada or in the field, is increasingly a matter of specialized and often *ad hoc* networking.

How Large Is the NGO Community?

There are a variety of measures of the size of the Canadian NGO community, all stressing a different feature of the community; at best, each provides an approximation, since data are notoriously unreliable. Yet regardless of the unit of measurement chosen, two points are clear: first, the NGO 'sector' is larger than often assumed; and second, the community has grown considerably over the past decade, and continues to grow.

Number of Agencies

As Figure 2.4 shows, the number of NGOs involved in development increased slowly in the first 60 years of this century, but grew at a phenomenal rate during the 1960s and 1970s, and continues to grow during the 1980s. Fully 16 percent of questionnaire respondents reported that their agency had been founded between 1980 and 1985, and even this figure may be understated, since some new agencies were not included in the original mailing list. In fact, the 1984-85 African crisis gave rise to a large number of new NGOs, not all of whom were included in the study. As was stated earlier, we have estimated the total NGO community to number some 220 agencies.

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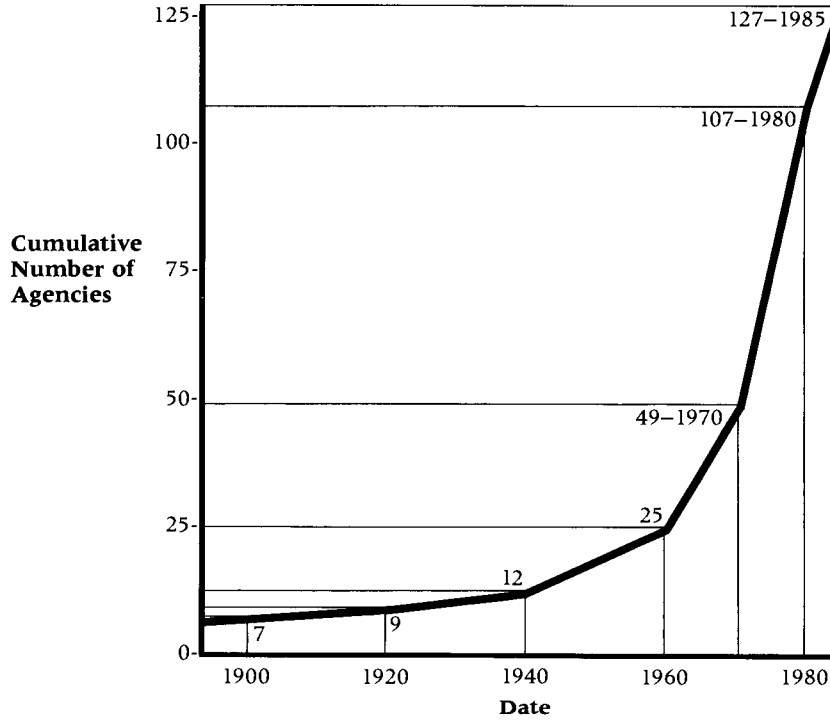
[7] For more detail on the activities of the councils, see Manitoba Institute of Management/ Coopérative d'Animation et de Consultation, *Evaluation Study of Provincial Councils of Non-Governmental Organizations*, Winnipeg, January 1985.

Figure 2.4

Date of Founding of a Sample of Canadian NGOs



Source: Questionnaire Data.

Number of Staff

Despite the constant formation of new agencies, the average size of agencies has also increased. According to questionnaire responses, the average number of staff per agency almost doubled between 1975 and 1984, increasing from six to 11 full-time equivalents. This does not include volunteer staff, or field staff outside Canada. The average figures conceal wide variations in number of staff; several agencies employ no paid staff, while some, such as CUSO, employ over 100 people in their Canadian offices.

It is difficult to arrive at a reliable figure for the number of Canadians directly involved in NGO work, but some tentative figures can be put forward. Based on the average figures presented above, total full-time paid staff in Canada number approximately 2,400. To this figure must be

added field personnel working outside Canada. Based on questionnaire responses, we can conclude that the number of Canadians working overseas with NGOs is at most some 500 (not counting missionaries, who are dealt with below). Most of these, however, work for the international parent of a Canadian agency, and thus have little contact with the Canadian office, or work on specific projects. In fact, only some 10 to 15 respondent agencies (out of a total of over 100 with overseas projects) have their own field staff officers responsible for project identification and monitoring.

If volunteer staff are included, the number of Canadians working for NGOs increases considerably. On average, questionnaire respondents count on the support of some 135 volunteers in Canada (full-time and part-time), which translates into a total figure of almost 30,000.[8] Volunteers working overseas (or 'cooperants', as they are often called) might add another 5,000 to this figure – almost 1,400 through volunteer placement agencies such as CUSO, CECI, WUSC, the Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) and the Organisation canadienne pour la solidarité et le développement (OCSD); a further 550 young people on short-term exchanges through Canada World Youth (CWY) and Canadian Crossroads International (CCI); and perhaps 3,000 missionaries doing primarily development (as opposed to pastoral) work.[9] In total, then, between 35,000 and 40,000 people may be directly involved in the work of Canadian NGOs. This does not include those who donate money to such agencies, or who are members of groups such as the YM/YWCA or the churches.

Funding

Funding for NGO activity comes primarily from two sources: private donations from individuals, corporations and foundations, and government grants.

As Table 2.3 shows, government funding of NGO activity has increased markedly over the past decade. For the most part, these funds are part of the official development assistance (ODA) budget, channelled through CIDA or provincial government matching grants programs; in addition, a

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[8] This figure is consistent with other available data. A 1984 survey of development education groups in Saskatchewan, for example, arrived at a "conservative estimate" of 3,500 volunteers working on development education alone in the province, or an average of 56 volunteers per agency. See Saskatchewan Council for International Cooperation, *A Survey of Development Education in Saskatchewan*, Regina, 1984.

[9] A 1985 study of Catholic missionaries arrived at a figure of 3,633 in total, of whom some 2,073 were primarily involved in development work. See Canadian Religious Conference (CRC), *Canadian Catholic Missionaries: 1985 Statistics*, Ottawa, 1985. Similar figures are not available for non-Catholic missionaries, but we can assume that there are at least 1,000 engaged in development work.

Table 2.3

ODA Disbursements to Canadian NGOs, 1976-77 – 1984-85
($ millions of current year)

	1976-77	1977-78	1978-79	1979-80	1980-81	1981-82	1982-83	1983-84	1984-85	1985-86 (estimate)
Regular Program										
CIDA	37.6	44.3	58.4	63.7	72.0	95.8	108.9	136.7	158.9	164.0
Provincial Government	n.a.	n.a.	6.5	9.5	10.8	11.4	13.1	10.6	9.7	14.4
Subtotal	37.6	44.3	64.9	73.2	82.8	107.2	122.0	147.3	168.6	178.4
Percent of ODA	(3.9)	(4.2)	(5.6)	(5.7)	(6.3)	(7.2)	(7.3)	(8.1)	(8.0)	(8.2)
Relief and Emergency Assistance[a]	—	—	—	17.4	4.7	6.6	7.2	17.7	37.4	25.0
Country Focus[b]	—	—	—	—	—	3.5	13.8	30.3	33.7	20.6
GRAND TOTAL	**37.6**	**44.3**	**64.9**	**90.6**	**87.5**	**117.3**	**143.0**	**195.3**	**249.7**	**224.0**
Percent of ODA	**(3.9)**	**(4.2)**	**(5.6)**	**(7.0)**	**(6.7)**	**(7.9)**	**(8.6)**	**(10.8)**	**(11.9)**	**(10.3)**
Total ODA	**973.1**	**1,050.5**	**1,165.9**	**1,288.9**	**1,306.5**	**1,489.0**	**1,669.7**	**1,813.5**	**2,100.6**	**2,174.0**

[a] Prior to 1979, emergency relief funds were administered by the Multilateral Programs Branch, and no figures for disbursements to NGOs are available.

[b] Only a portion of country focus projects are managed by NGO and ICDS divisions, so this figure underestimates the total volume of such transfers. No accurate figures are available for bilateral contracts, the other channel of non-responsive funding, but these too have increased since the late 1970s.

Source: Based on figures supplied by CIDA, various branches. Figures include disbursements to universities, colleges, unions, professional associations and cooperatives.

few agencies receive funding from other federal and provincial government programs not included in the ODA budget. There are several channels of ODA funding of NGOs. 'Regular' programs, such as NGO, ICDS, PPP, provincial government contributions and food aid, make up the lion's share of the total; these programs are all 'responsive', with government support in the form of matching grants to projects developed by the NGOs. Emergency relief funds (which are also responsive) are channelled through CIDA's IHA division, and more recently through a special fund for Africa. Finally, CIDA's four bilateral branches, primarily responsible for government-to government disbursements, have in recent years begun to channel some funds to NGOs, via contracts and so-called country focus projects.

In 1984-85, the total volume of ODA funds received by all NGOs (including universities, collleges, unions and professional associations not included in this study) was in the order of $250 million; in 1985-86, the total dipped slightly, largely as a result of a freeze on discretionary expenditures imposed by the government during the last three months of the fiscal year. Of the 1984-85 total, perhaps $35 million goes to universities, colleges, unions and professional associations, for a revised total of $215 million (or 10.2 percent of ODA). This does not include bilateral contracts or country focus projects managed by the bilateral branches, which together might add another $30 million to the total.

Added to this are private contributions to NGOs. Questionnaire data suggests that for each dollar of ODA funds received by NGOs in 1984, an average of $1.14 was raised from private sources. Using this figure, we can calculate that NGOs raised almost $280 million from private sources in 1984-85, bringing their total resource base to somewhere in the order of $525 million.

While such absolute figures are perhaps impressive, it is more enlightening to look at the NGO contribution relative to total ODA. If we add privately raised funds to total ODA, we arrive at a figure of $2.38 billion in total Canadian aid flows (official and non-official) in 1984-85. At $525 million, NGOs accounted for some 22 percent of the total. By way of comparison, government-to-government disbursements accounted for $875 million (37 percent), multilateral programs $690 million (29 percent), and the remainder was made up by the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), Petro Canada International, and miscellaneous programs. It is thus clear that NGOs are a major player in Canada's aid relationships, even measured in volume terms.

The volume of funds channelled to Canadian NGOs also appears impressive in comparison with other major donor countries. Table 2.4 presents comparative statistics for members of the OECD's Development Assistance Committee (DAC) in 1985. Such figures are admittedly in-

Table 2.4

NGO Resources for Development and Relief Activities, 1985

	Private Grants Extended by NGOs		DAC Members' Official Contributions to NGOs	
	US$ million equivalent	*$ per capita*	*US$ million equivalent*	*Percentage of total ODA*
Australia	52	3.30	13	1.7
Austria	18	2.38	13	1.7
Belgium	23	2.38	—	—
Canada	171	6.74	142	8.7
Denmark	16	3.13	7	1.6
Finland	13	2.65	4	1.9
France	65	1.18	43	1.1
Germany	424	6.95	174	5.9
Ireland	22	6.18	2	5.1
Italy	8	0.14	39	3.6
Japan	101	0.84	41	1.1
Netherlands	98	6.77	69	6.1
New Zealand	8	2.46	1	1.9
Norway	52	12.54	34	5.9
Sweden	78	9.34	41	4.9
Switzerland	54	8.27	41	13.6
United Kingdom	169	2.98	28	1.8
United States	1,513	6.32	803[a]	8.5
TOTAL, DAC COUNTRIES	**2,885**	**4.13**	**1,510[b]**	**5.1**

[a] Fiscal year. Includes $327 million related to food aid, excludes an additional $243 million for emergency programs administered by private voluntary organizations. Also includes subcontracting of the latter in addition to matching grants.

[b] In addition, the Commission of the European Communities contributed $32 million for co-financing NGO projects (and $44 million for food aid, as well as $35 million for emergency aid channelled through NGOs).

Source: Elena Borghese, "Third World Development: The Role of Non-Governmental Organizations," *OECD Observer*, 145 (April/May 1987), p. 11.

complete, since they are based only on projects submitted for co-funding by official aid agencies. They do, however, show some interesting comparisons. In volume terms, Canada ranks third (behind the United States and West Germany) for both government funding of NGOs (US$142 million) and private contributions (US$171 million). It ranks second (following Switzerland) in terms of percentage of ODA channelled to NGOs, despite the fact that some channels of government funding (humanitarian assistance, bilateral contracts, some country focus pro-

jects) are not included. On the other hand, Canada drops to seventh place in terms of per capita private contributions (US$5.30). While this is above the DAC average (and while there may be some reporting inaccuracies), it appears that Canadian NGOs have been less successful in attracting non-governmental resources than some of their counterparts in other donor countries.

Questionnaire data reveal that although private contributions to Canadian NGOs have grown considerably over the past decade – easily outstripping the rate of inflation – they have not kept pace with the tremendous expansion of government funding of NGO work. As a result, there has been a shift in the relative importance of private and public sector funding of Canadian NGOs: from almost 60 percent of total NGO resources in 1975, private sources had fallen to just over 50 percent in 1984. This trend has important implications for the NGO community, which will be discussed in Chapter 4.

Part II

The Bases of Voluntary Action

Foreword

As stated in the preface, our research has been based as much as possible on NGOs' *own* perceptions of their role and characteristics. The questionnaire responses highlighted a series of statements, or 'articles of faith', widely used by NGOs to describe their work. These statements, however, reflect not only the perceptions of Canadian development NGOs, but also certain broader principles of voluntary action in general; partly characteristics which set voluntary agencies apart from governments or for-profit enterprises, partly ideals toward which they strive. In the following chapters, we have organized our analysis around five such principles. These are given below together with the questionnaire responses – the articles of faith – from which the principles are derived.

Altruism: NGOs respond to the needs of others

"NGOs respond to local needs rather than imposing their own solutions"

"NGOs are sensitive to cultural factors, and concerned that their intervention should be appropriate to local beliefs and values"

Autonomy: NGOs are distinctive and independent from governments

"NGOs operate people-to-people rather than through government or other bureaucratic institutions"

"NGOs can reach needy groups which are not accessible through official channels"

Participation: NGOs provide channels for Canadians to participate in international development

"A major role of NGOs is to enable ordinary Canadians to participate directly in international development activities"

"NGOs aim to increase Canadians' awareness of development issues, by providing factual information on the basis of which people can form their own opinions"

Efficiency: NGOs mobilize and use financial and other resources in a cost-effective fashion

"NGOs are cost-effective, and can achieve results at much less cost than official aid agencies"

Cooperation: NGOs have distinctive relationships with beneficiary populations.

"NGOs break patterns of dependency by helping people to help themselves"

"NGOs represent a new model of North-South relationships based on sharing and dialogue among equals"

"NGOs strengthen local voluntary institutions in the communities in which they are working"

One final statement received broad support from questionnaire respondents: *"NGOs demonstrate innovativeness and flexibility in their programs."* In light of this, this report does more than assess to what extent the various self-descriptions are borne out in the programs of Canadian NGOs. It also considers how these characteristics are reinterpreted as the environment of NGO work has changed. The pages which follow, therefore, examine the validity of the articles of faith for NGO work, the way in which they have evolved over time, and their implications for future NGO activities.

3 Altruism: Acting on Principle

> *It is the duty of every person, regardless of means, without anticipating any return, to be charitable, that is to say to help those in misery recover their honour.*
>
> — Immanuel Kant

> *I felt impelled to do it out of a sense of rage and shame. Shame was the overriding thing. I felt ashamed that we allowed these things to happen to others.*
>
> — Bob Geldof

Most voluntary agencies come into being from a sense of compassion or injustice, a burning vision of a wrong to be righted, or a new perception of the world to be expressed and acted upon. Their goals, unlike those of government or business, are altruistic: they seek to benefit others rather than themselves. This institutional disinterestedness is both a strength and a weakness of voluntary agencies. A strength because it draws upon the tremendous energy inherent in the noblest of human urges for justice, compassion, and service; a weakness because it seems somehow to place such organizations above critical assessment of their own motivation and operations.

But organizations exist to translate ideals into action, and actions are subject to assessment. Translating ideals into action entails choices, compromises and, inevitably, disagreement and conflict. As Barbara Harrell-Bond notes in a study of emergency assistance to refugees in Sudan, "discussion of aid programmes conducted under the banner of humanitarianism concentrates . . . not on reasons for failure, but on competing claims to moral rectitude. The struggle for moral supremacy can be fierce indeed."[1] To overcome this tendency it is necessary, in Jorgen Lissner's phrase, to "demythologise organised altruism,"[2] in other words to ask (in this case, of Canadian NGOs) what are the motivations for NGO activity; how are these expressed in development and relief work; how and by whom are needs identified; and to whom are the helpers accountable?

The Aid Motivation

Most NGOs are created from a sense of mission, clear and unambiguous: to feed the hungry, to care for the sick, to assist refugees and others in

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[1] B.E. Harrell-Bond, *Imposing Aid: Emergency Assistance to Refugees* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), p. 26.

[2] Jorgen Lissner, *The Politics of Altruism* (Geneva: Lutheran World Federation, 1977), p. i.

distress. For a new agency, the initial emphasis is on direct assistance, or provision of services such as health or education. In time, however, the inadequacies of a response-to-needs approach become apparent. The sheer magnitude of the problems which an agency seeks to address compared with its resources, the need to shift initiative to indigenous people rather than have them rely indefinitely on external support, even the sense that the services being provided are more properly the responsibility of the local government, all prod the agency to re-assess its role and strategy. It begins to see that a humanitarian motivation emphasizes *its* role as the 'helper' and cements a welfare or caritative approach which has a limited and short-term perspective. Faced with these contradictions, the agency moves toward a model of development that emphasizes the strengthening of indigenous people's capacity to confront and solve their development needs. Agency rhetoric now extolls 'help for self-help', and it relies more heavily on local NGOs to interpret community needs.

The difficulty which this evolution poses for the development agency is that the early welfare approach is the reason why it receives much of its support from the public. Indeed, the agency's fundraising and publicity material projects this self-image, successfully highlighting tangible and immediate needs: famine victims, homeless children, people ravaged by disease. Such graphic images evoke a powerful response, and there are sometimes strong internal pressures to retain this public message even though it may increasingly be at variance with the more 'developmental' approach being adopted as the agency re-thinks its role and re-deploys its resources. An example of this is provided by some child sponsorship agencies whose message has changed only subtly in recent years but whose programs have shifted significantly away from welfare or individual sponsorship, toward broadly based community development.

Nevertheless, in examining our sample of the work of Canadian agencies over the decade 1975-85 a clear pattern emerges: in 1975, 17 agencies supported child sponsorship (accounting on average for 42.7 percent of their program budgets); ten years later, 13 of these agencies had cut the child sponsorship share of their program budgets, often drastically; two remained at approximately the same level, and two had increased their sponsorship programs (but one of these was Foster Parents Plan, which increasingly does community development under the rubric of child sponsorship). If we look at agencies specializing in direct material assistance, such as providing blankets, clothing or medical supplies, we find a similar pattern: 12 agencies of the 18 (66 percent) doing such work in 1975 had reduced their involvement over the next 10 years, many of them eliminating it altogether. And, despite prominent attention paid to emergency needs by the media, there is a similar trend away from relief projects.

For most agencies, this evolution of strategy has been reflected in changes in their structures and procedures: initial zeal has become tempered by a greater concern for procedures and planning; *ad hoc* actions have been transformed into ongoing commitments; increased funding has imposed needs for more systematic controls and accountability, and individual initiative has been shaped by collective responsibility. In short, institutions are born.

The Manitoba Institute for Management, in its 1985 evaluation of the provincial councils for international cooperation, presented a typology of NGOs moving from infancy, "dramatically underfunded, understaffed, and very vulnerable," through maturity marked by a "results orientation and a strong administrative system . . . but the urgency is gone," to bureaucracy ". . . forms, procedures, and paperwork. Nothing gets done."[3] This progression is, of course, over-simplified, but it captures the sense of growing institutionalization as organizations mature.

This evolution should not be seen as smooth, clearly defined or irreversible. A new disaster, fundraising imperatives, the internal dynamics within an NGO, personnel changes, all influence NGO behaviour, and within one agency a spectrum of activities from service delivery to support for a redistribution of power or resources in a community may be carried out simultaneously. In fact, change in the NGO community is not so much a linear progression as wave-like. As agencies become established and mature, new organizations come into existence, in a sense re-occupying the ground recently vacated by the older bodies. This perhaps testifies to the strength of some of the original motivations for voluntary development work, and to the tenacity of some of the basic conceptions of aid, which NGOs have embodied, as servicing the needs of the poor. Thus, despite the trend on the part of most established NGOs, away from welfare and direct material assistance, new agencies created since 1980 devote a significantly larger proportion of their budgets to relief and material supplies (more than twice as much as for agencies founded before 1980). (See Table 3.1)

Ironically, the evolution in motivation and approach of such agencies generates concern as well as approval. Larger budgets and more specialized knowledge may have significantly reduced the role of volunteers, concentrating decision-making power in the hands of staff. Increasing reluctance to take risks and greater reliance on established procedures may have made NGOs more predictable, and therefore more acceptable partners of government; they may also have become vulnerable to criticism that they have grown too ponderous, protective and rigid.

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[3] Manitoba Institute of Management/Coopérative d'Animation et de Consultation, *Evaluation Study of Provincial Councils of Non-Governmental Organizations.*

Table 3.1

Overseas Activities of Questionnaire Respondents (percent)

Type of Activity	Percent of All Overseas Activities (Average) All Agencies (n = 121)	Agencies Founded Since 1980 (n = 20)
Relief and Emergency Assistance	10.5	22.7
Development Assistance Projects	58.9	47.0
Placement of Canadians Overseas	12.6	7.9
Child and Family Sponsorship	9.3	2.6
Material assistance (e.g., medical supplies)	8.0	20.3
TOTAL	**100.0**	**100.0**

Source: Questionnaire data. Figures are raw averages, not weighted by relative sizes of agencies. Development education and other in-Canada programs are excluded.

Relief

The most unambiguous example of altruism in action is the humanitarian response to disasters. The public's response to the Indo-Chinese boat people in 1979, the Mexico City earthquake in 1985, and of course the African famine, demonstrated Canadians' compassion for the victims of tragedy. NGOs were among the first to react, presenting themselves as a way to channel money, supplies and other forms of assistance speedily and efficiently.

Canadian NGOs have delivered emergency relief either through their international affiliates (such as the World Council of Churches, UNICEF or OXFAM-UK), through local voluntary organizations in the affected regions, or directly through their own field staffs. Most have tended to use the first or second of these options where available: in the recent response to famine in Africa, for example, 50 percent of the matching funds disbursed by Africa Emergency Aid (AEA) in the first or 'emergency' phase, were channelled through international head offices; 37 percent went through such local organizations as the Christian Relief and Development Agency in Ethiopia, Sudanaid, or the Relief Society of Tigray; 7 percent of funds were spent by local government structures, mainly for water supply or food distribution, or because the work was being carried out in countries like Angola where there is little NGO activity; only 4 percent of the funds were spent by Canadian agencies in the field (see Table 3.2).

Table 3.2

African Emergency Aid: Disbursements on Relief Projects, by Type of Implementing Agency

Type of Implementing Agency	Number of Projects		Value of Projects ($ thousands)	
International NGO	60	(46.9%)	15,252.5	(50.5%)
Local NGO	50	(39.1%)	11,281.3	(37.3%)
Local Government	10	(7.8%)	2,057.3	(6.8%)
Canadian NGO	4	(3.1%)	1,289.4	(4.3%)
Uncertain	4	(3.1%)	339.0	(1.1%)
TOTAL	**128**	**(100.0%)**	**30,219.5**	**(100.0%)**

Source: Adapted from data in Africa Emergency Aid, *Africa Emergency Aid: Final Report of the Activities of Canadian NGOs Responding to The Famine*, Ottawa, March 1986.

The heavy reliance on international or 'off-shore' affiliates is not surprising. In 1975 fully three-quarters of the agencies which were funding relief activities were the Canadian affiliates of international church structures or of U.S. or European NGOs. Many of them had been created originally as the Canadian fundraising arm for a parent body itself heavily involved in disaster relief, thereby benefiting from being part of an international network, with access to a pool of relatively experienced relief workers, a ready-made delivery system, and resource sharing. Relief recipients, too, benefited from the degree of coordination made possible by channelling aid flows from several sources through a single international structure (particularly the churches, WCC for the Protestant agencies, or CARITAS for Catholic agencies).

The familiar refrain that 'our experienced relief workers are on the spot' – designed to reassure the public as to the probity and efficacy of the operation – normally refers to the staff of the international agency rather than of the Canadian agency actually soliciting funds. This in itself is in no way harmful: where suffering exists the first priority must be to distribute necessities and help people to re-build their lives. However, since the role of Canadian 'branch plant' agencies has been largely that of fundraising, few of them have have become expert in coping with the effects of disasters: most of them (and consequently most Canadians) mistakenly see disasters as episodic crises, often inexplicable acts of God. Given that most agencies doing relief work are tied to their international affiliates and respond 'vertically' to their appeals, little has been accomplished to improve 'horizontal' planning and coordination among the Canadian agencies themselves. There is, for example, no body equivalent to the Disasters Emergency Committee (DEC) in the U.K., which represents the

major British agencies, decides when disasters have occurred and then undertakes a single joint appeal, with the proceeds divided up among the participating agencies.

In Canada, disasters tend on the contrary to spark a highly competitive race for donor dollars, and the public has little objective basis for judging the relative merits of various claimants. The episodic treatment of relief activities discourages systematic planning, such as the development of early warning systems, as well as an understanding of the potential for linking immediate relief with longer-term development needs (that is preventive rather than remedial action). It offers little direct experience of the complexity of implementing effective relief, which allows agencies to place disasters in the environmental and cultural context in which they have occurred.

The criticism of an episodic treatment of relief in favour of planning and experience may sound utopian. Emergencies by their very nature suggest urgency, improvisation, the primacy of action over analysis. But through many years of experience, particularly in such overwhelming disasters as Biafra, Bangladesh's independence war, Kampuchea, the Bihar and African famines and others, important lessons have been learned. William Shawcross in his study of the Kampuchean relief operation, *The Quality of Mercy,* refers to the often inexperienced and short-term staff thrown into emergency relief work, procurement decisions made hastily without adequate information, and mistakes made under pressure to disburse funds rapidly.[4]

Levels of relief spending by agencies will of course fluctuate depending upon whether or not a major disaster occurs in any given year, yet relief activity over time exhibits the same wave-like pattern mentioned above. Twenty-four of the agencies surveyed funded relief projects in 1975, devoting on average 21.7 percent of their program budgets to this activity; by 1984, 13 of these agencies, including such prominent actors as World Vision, Horizons of Friendship and the Adventist Development and Relief Agency Canada (ADRA), had reduced proportions of their budgets earmarked for relief. During this same period, however, a number of new agencies were created, in many cases specifically in response to a new disaster situation. By 1984, 10 new agencies had become involved in relief work, none of them Canadian offices of 'off-shore' or international NGOs. Moreover, a number of other organizations have been established since 1984 in the wake of publicity about the Africa crisis.

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[4] The OXFAM consortium raised a total of £21 million for Kampuchea and spent all but £2 million of it by the end of 1980; this left little for longer-term development aid, and public concern for Kampuchea had by then largely evaporated. See William Shawcross, *The Quality of Mercy: Cambodia, Holocaust and Modern Conscience* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1984).

This apparent contradiction in trends reminds us that the genesis of many Canadian NGOs lies in the humanitarian concern to relieve suffering, seen most starkly and poignantly in times of overwhelming disaster; any perception that Canadian NGOs are not adequately doing this – in spite of their own publicity to the contrary – leaves a gap that is quickly filled by a new agency, possibly one with an exclusive focus on a particular area of need.

Ironically, some established agencies may themselves be seen by outsiders as 'part of the problem': their lack of direct involvement, concern not to act too precipitously or to ride roughshod over local government or non-government agencies (all lessons learned from hard experience) may be interpreted by others as remoteness, bureaucratic indifference and an attitude of business-as-usual. Most tellingly, established agencies may be perceived as closed preserves. People who are motivated to 'do something' (ironically, in part due to the very success of efforts to mobilize public response) are often frustrated by their inability to get involved, and so determine to work 'directly' on the problem by setting up a new institution – more open, participatory and community-based than the established ones!

Village twinning is a recent example. The twinning concept is an updated and more sophisticated version of child sponsorship, equally personal but less individualistic. A recent magazine article says:

> Voluntary agencies may be very good at what they are supposed to be good at – the work in the field – but they may not be good at the task of creating links between the communities involved, the donors and the recipients. To do that job well requires building a solid base in the donor community and a level of communication at least as good as the other media competing for a citizen's attention.[5]

In effect, the 'twinners' and others who share their views are arguing that involvement with and understanding of indigenous communities are as important to development, over the long term, as the raising of money and shipment of relief. In their view, traditional agencies are failing because they lack detailed information and focus too narrowly on fundraising:

> Twinners believe – and the aftermath of the Ethiopian crisis reinforces this – that donors want to grow up and be treated on a par with the organization spending their money. They want more scrutiny of what's happening, and a more detailed understanding of how the aid process works – who are the middlemen and what are the grinding day-to-day problems.[6]

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[5] "Q and A: What's all this about village twinning?" *Villagers* (Special Preview Edition, 1986), p. 5.

[6] *Ibid.*, p. 6.

Some go further, complaining that agencies which route the funds they raise to international affiliates deprive Canada of due credit, since the parent body may be identified as American or European.

The spontaneous upwelling of new organizations is part of the cycle of regeneration in the voluntary community, stemming from a desire for involvement, and a perception of a gap or an unmet need. In times of financial stringency it may be that only disasters provide an opening for new ventures to develop, by making new resources available, even for organizations with no experience.

But while new perceptions can enrich understanding of development processes, there is a cost. Successive emergencies have shown that relief work is a specialized field. Inexperienced organizations, however well-intentioned (and however long they have existed) can do great damage. Knowledge of the milieu and a commitment to assist beyond the immediate emergency are critical. It is a matter of some concern that 20 of the 44 Canadian agencies funding famine relief in one African country in 1984 had never worked in that country before; of the remainder, 10 had relief experience elsewhere, four were already supporting development work in the same country, and the other 10 had neither been involved in relief work nor in the particular African country prior to the drought.

Even though Canadian agencies rarely implement relief projects, inexperience can exact a heavy price. In one example, a new agency, established in the wake of the Ethiopian crisis, sent 10 tonnes of chocolate, butter, margarine and other supplies to Ethiopia. A fundraiser said at the time the chocolate – valued at $110,000, but donated by a manufacturer – contained nuts, which would be a good source of protein even if the chocolate melted.[7] Such stories, while infrequent, are not totally uncommon. Perhaps even more crucial, relief activities may not be properly designed or monitored to ensure that they contribute to a process of long-term development.

Disasters are not only episodic events – springing from chance, extreme climate or ecological conditions – but also indicators of the vulnerability of a community or a country. Poverty is what makes people prone to disasters and limits their capacity to plan for and cope with emergency situations.[8] Poverty helps to explain for example, the difference in the toll exacted by the toxic spill at Bhopal compared with that which occurred in the train derailment in Mississauga, Ontario the same year, or the cyclone in Bangladesh compared to the one in southern Ontario, both in 1985. One of the defining characteristics of developed societies is that they can

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[7] *The Toronto Star*, 1 April 1987.

[8] See, for example, *Famine: A Man-made Disaster. A Report for the Independent Commission on International Humanitarian Issues* (London: Pan Books, 1985).

afford to shield their citizens from the consequences of the unpredictable – through emergency reserves, disaster preparedness, and specially trained and equipped people.

The lessons for Canadian voluntary agencies are twofold. First, relief operations need skilled and experienced people on the scene who are familiar with local circumstances. So while there may be merit in a few Canadian agencies acquiring the ability to plan and implement relief activities, the bulk of such assistance will continue to be channelled through international affiliates or through indigenous NGOs in developing countries. A better idea for Canadian agencies might be to strengthen their capacities for early disaster warning and coordinated response, leaving the delivery of emergency relief largely to others. Indigenous Southern non-governmental structures may have some important advantages as relief agencies. They are less likely than outsiders to have an episodic view of relief; from their vantage, the term 'disaster' is simply at one end of a spectrum of need, and dealing with it is part of building a community's capacity to meet its members' basic needs, including security in the face of crisis. Indigenous NGOs are less likely to rely on expatriate personnel, thus saving money and ensuring that the lessons of experience are internalized. Especially in areas of chronic or recurrent crisis, such as parts of Africa or South Asia, this locally based relief capacity will constitute an increasingly valuable resource to foreign NGOs seeking to respond in a timely and efficient fashion to human suffering.

A second major point is that, Canadian agencies must realize that good development is itself the best form of prevention, and that even emergencies offer opportunities to promote it. An example of the last point can be drawn from Thailand, where in 1979 a Canadian agency already present in the country designed a project to take care of refugees who were streaming across the border from Kampuchea. Using its own and funds from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), it established a consortium of Thai agencies to manage a 'Holding Centre', or transit camp, at Kab Cherng in northeastern Thailand. As a progress report phrased it, the aim of this project was "not only the relieving of the suffering of the Kampuchean people but also the achievement of self-reliance and full participation in their own local affairs within the framework of an all Thai-Kampuchean working relationship."[9] A key element of this approach was to ensure that project inputs would also have spin-off benefits for the surrounding communities (for example, purchasing local foodstuffs for the camp as much as possible, to help farmers in this economically depressed region). An evaluation of the project carried out a year after it ended reported the following findings:

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[9] CUSO Thailand, "Progress Report to UNHCR," February 1981 (mimeographed).

> the reliance on Thai organizations resulted in a . . . very constructive working relationship with the host government officials . . . this was attributed to the better understanding of the government's policy as well as the absence of language barriers, particularly at the field level. As for the implementing agencies, they all appreciated having the opportunity to do what they always felt they could do and do well. Most agreed that one of the main factors against their increased participation in refugee work was their limited financial resources. It, therefore, seems desirable to give more consideration, by foreign and international agencies, to build their refugee operation plans around local expertise.[10]

The experience gained by the Thai agencies as well as the contacts established through the project with neighboring communities paid off in the decision to launch a development program in the area after Kab Cherng was closed:

> all participating NGOs agreed that . . . the lessons learned from the Project were very useful, particularly in strengthening their staff's capability . . . Furthermore these experiences and resulting credibility were found to be contributing to the decision to launch a Village Development Programme for the 53 villages in the same province.[11]

Identifying Needs

As we have seen, even in relief situations, identifying the needs of people is not always simple. The straightforward welfare approach to helping others is based on the assumption that everybody has the same basic needs for food, shelter and clothing, and that the essential issue is simply one of efficient delivery of aid. The concept of development, however, rests on no such simple assumptions. Since the collapse of 'stages of growth theories' which took for granted that all societies wished to follow the Western industrial model (a collapse perhaps most dramatically underscored by the Khomeini revolution in Iran), outsiders have become more circumspect about defining the future for others. Needs other than the most basic, it transpires, are heavily influenced by cultural factors. Who is to determine whether the community centre, church or mosque which the village wants is more or less necessary than the clinic which the donor agency is willing to fund? Who is to determine whether the provision of bore holes and pipe-borne water is more efficient than the time-consuming and risky process of consultation which will produce hand-dug wells in a self-help project?

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[10] CUSO Thailand, "Report of the Project Evaluation," report prepared by Malee Sundhagul, *et al*, February 1982 (mimeographed).

[11] *Ibid.*

These questions face any voluntary development agency but they are particularly problematic for Canadian NGOs. As was pointed out in the previous chapter, only a minority of Canadian agencies have personnel working in Third World countries; the majority of these, moreover, work on specific projects; only some 15 agencies have an ongoing field presence with responsibility for identifying needs and communicating these directly to the Canadian agency. As a result, Canadian agencies are not only less able to assess needs themselves, but also less able to undertake the discussion and consultation with community groups that would help to guide their decisions.

Instead, they rely on local indigenous agencies and international operational agencies to assess needs. Of the sample of 51 Canadian agency projects visited in the field for this study, 22 (44 percent) were proposed by an indigenous NGO, 10 (20 percent) came through an international affiliate, 10 (20 percent) were identified by the Canadian agency itself, and 9 were identified by others, such as a local parish priest, a local government body or official, another Canadian agency, or CIDA. Another study, a survey of NGO project officers that was carried out for CIDA's corporate evaluation of the NGO program, indicated an even lower level of agency reliance on field staff: 40 percent of projects identified in that study originated as a result of a request directly from an indigenous NGO; 14 percent came from a local agency through a national or international coordinating body (such as the Community Development Trust Fund in Tanzania); 24 percent originated with an international parent or affiliate of the Canadian agency; 8 percent came from another Canadian agency. Only 8 percent of projects originated with the overseas staff of the agency which funded the project. (The source of a further 6 percent of projects was either unspecified or unknown.[12])

The capacity to assess needs, however, is important not just in project identification and selection, but also in allowing implementors in the field to adapt as projects evolve. Ideally, agencies should have regular, ongoing communication with project implementors and beneficiaries so as to monitor progress. Agencies implementing projects in the field require information on project results and impact, while funding agencies need financial information to meet accounting and reporting guidelines. In the majority of projects visited for this study, (39 out of 51, or 76 percent), agencies were judged to receive adequate information to meet these

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[12] Andrew G. Hamilton and Martin Mujica, "A Mail Survey of Project Officers in the Canadian NGO Community," report prepared for CIDA, January 1985, p. 30. One explanation for the differences between the results of the two studies lies in the exclusion of ICDS agencies from the CIDA study. Of the 11 projects in our study supported by ICDS agencies, five (10 percent of the total sample) were initiated by the agencies' own field staff, one (a country focus project) was initiated by CIDA, and the rest (all projects implemented by local NGOs, with CUSO support as well as that of other Canadian agencies) were all initiated by a local NGO.

needs. But in at least half of the projects there were doubts as to whether the Canadian agency would be able to learn from the project lessons to apply to future project selection and management. In other words, while agencies generally receive adequate management information, they often lack the kind of contextual information about local needs and development problems essential for planning.

In part, this vacuum results from the lack of field capacity mentioned earlier. But for some agencies it also reflects the nature of their programs, which in many cases are so widely dispersed as to outstrip the capacity of Canada-based program staff to assimilate information. Fifty-eight percent of questionnaire respondents indicated that they have projects in 10 or more countries. While some agencies (e.g., Pueblito Canada, Plan Nagua, Jamaica Self-Help, or Missi-Haiti '79) limit their countries of involvement, there has been a general trend among Canadian NGOs (even small agencies) to expand the number of countries in which they work. For agencies with small program staff this may make monitoring almost impossible, as well as dissipating effort and impact; to counter this, some agencies (for example, the Canadian Organization for Development through Education (CODE), Match International) have moved to reduce the scope of their programs. CODE's strategy plan for 1985-88, for example, makes the following statement:

> In virtually all recent CODE evaluations, trip reports and staff forums, it has been concluded that if we wish to have a more meaningful impact, then we cannot continue to function in the traditional way in over 80 countries. CODE must begin to make some judgments as to where its resources should be concentrated.[13]

Government aid agencies have also been criticized for their insufficient capacity to remain abreast of evolving needs overseas, and to respond quickly and effectively to such needs. The 1987 report of the Parliamentary Committee examining Canadian aid policies (the Winegard Committee) argues forcefully for a greater decentralization of authority within CIDA, which it contends will lead to improved project selection, better monitoring, and more rapid approval and/or modification of projects.[14] CIDA has already taken the first steps to increase its field presence overseas through the creation of 'Canadian Cooperation Offices' in some recipient countries. Further steps to decentralize are planned, although the full extent of the changes, and the speed with which they will be

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[13] Canadian Organization for Development through Education (CODE), "A Three-Year CODE Strategy Plan," 1985-88, Ottawa, 1984.

[14] Canada, House of Commons, Standing Committee on External Affairs and International Trade, *For Whose Benefit? Report of the Standing Committee on External Affairs and International Trade on Canada's Development Assistance Policies and Programs* (Ottawa: Queen's Printer for Canada, May 1987), pp. 124-45.

instituted, remain to be worked out. This decentralization puts more pressure on NGOs to improve their own links to the field, particularly if they intend to justify their programs on the basis of a unique and independent capacity to identify and respond to needs 'at the grassroots'.

However, the solution to the problems of needs assessment and monitoring for Canadian NGOs, is *not* an increase in their agency field staff directly managing projects; in fact, such a move would in all likelihood run against the trend to devolving more of the responsibility for projects to local people. Rather, for the majority of agencies, the primary source of monitoring and needs assessment information will continue to be the indigenous NGOs responsible for project implementation; their linguistic and cultural affinity with local beneficiaries gives them a considerable advantage over foreign-based and often transient agencies. For those Canadian agencies linked to international affiliates, information will continue to be centralized in the parent agency – although for some agencies, such as CARE Canada, devolution of programming will increase their information about the projects they support. And for a few operational Canadian agencies, needs will be defined either by field staff, or through their links to government and multilateral agencies.

For the majority of agencies, however, improving their links with their Southern counterparts means regularizing and systematizing the flow of information between themselves and the recipient local NGO. As will be emphasized in the next chapter, management of information is central to the work of NGOs and will increase in importance in the future. At present NGO monitoring of projects depends substantially on information gleaned from the (infrequent) trips of agency staff and board members (and in some cases, the personnel of other agencies), and the arm's length contact provided by written progress reports. Reciprocal visits by project implementors to Canada are rare, and the use of computer-assisted networking strategies is only beginning. To a large degree, improved information flows will require a far-reaching reorientation of the relationship between Northern and Southern NGOs, in the direction of more equal sharing of responsibilities. As will be discussed in Chapter 7, some progress has been made, but considerable ground remains to be covered.

Increasing reliance on Southern NGOs in needs assessment, project identification and monitoring does not preclude a role for Canadian agency staff, but it does imply a certain re-thinking of that role. Canada-based program staff, for example, will probably visit specific projects less often, concentrating more on networking with project implementors. There will also continue to be a role for field staff, not as project supervisors or managers, but as channels of communication between Northern and Southern NGOs. Agencies such as CUSO and CANSAVE have found that an ongoing presence in areas where projects are being funded is an

indispensable aid to project selection and monitoring, even where projects are wholly implemented by local NGOs. Increasingly, however, such personnel may be locally engaged staff rather than Canadians. And to a degree, 'like-minded' Canadian agencies, particularly smaller agencies, may share field staff in a given country in order to save money.

Conclusion: Aid and Accountability

We introduced this chapter with the statement that NGOs are altruistic, that is, they work for the benefit of others. This raises a question: to whom, then, are NGOs accountable for what they do?

Most agencies would respond that they are in the first instance accountable to their individual donors – to the people who contribute funds. But donors constitute a large, unorganized group, and it is in practice virtually impossible for them to hold an agency accountable in other than the most general sense.

A more real accountability is exercised by the government, both through Revenue Canada – for organizations with a charitable registration – and more precisely through CIDA, which is in turn accountable to Parliament for taxpayers' money spent by NGOs. Unlike the public, government bodies are able to enforce their demand for accountability, since they possess both detailed information on NGO activities (Revenue Canada tax returns, project reports, evaluation studies) and effective sanctions (the threat to withdraw an agency's funding or charitable status). But even though NGOs accept the legitimacy of CIDA's claim, most are quick to assert that their more 'theoretical' accountability to individual donors comes first. They have also fought to limit the enforcement of CIDA's claim – in particular, to prevent CIDA having unrestricted right of access to Third World partner agencies in the field,

In the midst of these multiple and often competing lines of accountability, NGOs often lose sight of their accountability to the beneficiaries of their work, or their partners in the South. NGOs face an anomaly in responding to needs defined by one group, beneficiaries or NGO planners/implementors, while holding themselves responsible for their success or failure to an entirely different group, namely their donors or the government. It is necessary to differentiate two broad forms of accountability: accountability for funds NGOs receive and how they are used, and accountability for results achieved through the use of those funds. To date, NGOs have concentrated almost exclusively on the former.

More and more, however, real accountability to beneficiaries and partners in the Third World is becoming a reality for Canadian NGOs. Agencies need to examine whether their work encourages or promotes this at present. Giving assistance in the form of grants or gifts discourages

accountability: welfare recipients are in no position to refuse or even negotiate the forms of assistance. NGOs can help to promote their accountability in the design of projects, for instance by providing health services on a user-payment basis rather than free of charge, or basing agricultural work on the provision of credit rather than grants; in this way, former welfare recipients become clients and 'customers', entitled to insist on full value from those providing services.

Similarly, as Southern NGOs and community groups implement a growing share of development work, they will develop the countervailing power to insist on accountability from their funders.

This need not be seen as a threat to NGOs' more traditional lines of responsibility to donors, but it does mean that agencies need to take a broader perspective on the issue of accountability – one based as much on non-financial as on financial considerations. It also means that NGOs must resist a simple response to evidence of human suffering, and instead base their programming on careful consultation with beneficiaries. In other words they must avoid the assumption that good motives necessarily lead to right actions; altruism is not an end in itself.

4 Autonomy: Charting Independence

> *Voluntarism has been caught in the straitjacket of service. It has become fixated on the concept of provision to the neglect of advocacy that deals with the root causes which create the demand for service.*
>
> – Vernon Jordan, *Voluntarism in America*

Independence from the state is perhaps the most obvious common characteristic of voluntary organizations, expressed most unambiguously in their very designation as 'non-governmental'. In democratic societies this independence flows from their juridical status, their financial autonomy, and their capacity to articulate their own goals and to pursue appropriate ways to achieve them. Moreover, as we saw earlier, the role of the voluntary sector preceded that of government in most fields of social service, including international cooperation. Indeed, until relatively recently there was little overlap between the activities of government and of non-governmental organizations. Drawing on their own motivation and resources, NGOs have been to a considerable extent insulated from official priorities and shifting development dogmas.

NGOs tend to share a distinctive concept of development which is people-centered, poverty-focused and self-reliant.[1] Implicit in such a concept is criticism of the excessively aggregative and impersonal view of development embraced by many of the major bilateral and multilateral agencies. But is this critique predicated on a different perception of the goal of development, or simply on the most effective means of attaining it? Both official and voluntary agencies would agree that the purpose of development in the broadest sense is the full realization of human potential – not simply expressed in higher living standards, but also in forms of cultural expression, in the development of spiritual values, in people's ability to participate in determining their future, and so on. Perhaps the essential difference in NGOs' perception of development is an explicit ideal of men and women as bearers of values rather than as just producers and consumers; hence, development must integrate ideas of justice, self-determination and dignity. Abstract human values have historically been difficult for governments to handle, given their overriding concern for national sovereignty and their often short-term calculations of their own national interests. But for many voluntary organizations, both religious and secular, such values are a direct reflection of their own ethical foundations and the source of their motivation and commitment. Not surprisingly, this translates into sometimes strong differences between

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[1] See, for example, CCIC, "Policy Paper: A Framework for Canada's Official Development Assistance," Ottawa, November 1979.

governmental and non-governmental views of both ends and means, sharpened by the very different opportunities and constraints which each face.

Despite this traditional philosophic divergence, there are now many forces tending to narrow the differences between governmental and non-governmental approaches to international development; the increasing flow of official funding through NGOs has engendered much greater interaction between the two. As a result, on the one hand, governments and multilateral agencies are being influenced by NGOs to meet people's basic needs, to recognize the key role of women, to give higher priority to human resource development and to overlooked groups such as small farmers, minorities or entrepreneurs. On the other hand, NGOs have subjected themselves to the discipline of the project format, have become more institutionalized, and in many cases have begun to broaden the scope of their development activities beyond caring for isolated individuals, families or communities. Increasingly, the vocabularies of government and NGOs have become indistinguishable. As the gap narrows it has become difficult to determine from the pronouncements of Canadian voluntary development agencies how 'different' they now view themselves to be from government. At times they argue that increased government support is justified precisely because they are doing what government cannot do, or ought not to do; at other times they argue equally forcefully that they deserve more support because they represent a more cost-effective way for government aid to achieve its objectives.

This chapter examines the basis of claims to distinctiveness from government, particularly in terms of unique access to information, and assesses the impact on NGO autonomy of increased government funding.

Information and Communication

Much of the credibility and legitimacy of Northern NGOs and their defence of their autonomy rests on their claim to have unique access to, and knowledge of, the real needs and aspirations of people in the countries in which they work. It is this, they say, which qualifies them to act as advocates for the poor, to promote and/or oppose various government aid or foreign policies, and to insist on the relevance of their own work. This knowledge may derive from direct contact with people and experience in the Third World, long-standing relationships with Southern organizations, or regular communication with partner agencies and field staff. (Indeed it could be said that to a considerable extent, the business of NGOs *is* communication: needs are communicated from partner agencies or staff in the field, packaged as projects and processed by an NGO, and then sent out to a donor public by means of fundraising appeals or grant applications.) Ideally, timely and accurate information guides an NGO's programming decisions, shapes its understanding of the context in which

it is operating, and feeds its educational activities; in short, its ability to communicate decisively affects its overall effectiveness and impact.

In light of this, it is surprising how little attention is in fact paid to information and communication by Canadian NGOs. Only a few – mainly research or policy advocacy groups like the Latin American Working Group (LAWG) or the Centre d'Information et de Documentation sur le Mozambique et l'Afrique Australe (CIDMAA) – have systematically developed networks to generate and disseminate information, and most of that is of a specialized nature.

A survey conducted in 1984 found that most agencies relied on three sources for the information they needed to do their work: personal communications, the mainstream press, and government publications.[2] Personal contact, though a potent means of sharing information, is intermittent, vulnerable to staff changes, and highly dependent upon individual ability to listen and to communicate; the mainstream press, in Canada, is notoriously deficient in its coverage of international events;[3] government publications, while more or less reliable depending upon the issue and the government, are unlikely to nourish an independent 'non-governmental' analysis of what is happening in the world.

Nor is information, once gathered, efficiently managed. For most agencies there is paradoxically, both too much and too little of it. Although three-quarters of the respondents to the 1984 survey already had, or were planning to acquire computers, less than 10 percent used these for information management (other than for mailing lists and office tasks) or to access on-line data bases. Our own questionnaire arrived at similar results. The 1984 survey concluded:

> Communication resources and skills have always been essential to the work of Canadian NGOs. Developing overseas projects, development education programming, fund-raising and administration all require good communication and information management for suc-

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[2] IDERA/Inter Pares, *Final Report on Phase 1 of a Study into the Feasibility of Establishing a Development Communications Centre*, Ottawa: January 1984.

[3] *Ibid.* See also Dennis Schroeder, *A Survey of International News Coverage by the Canadian Media* (Manuscript Report MR20) (Ottawa: International Development Research Centre, March 1980); or, Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies, Conrad Grebel College, "North American Perceptions of Conflict in the Horn of Africa," Discussion Paper for the "Consultation on the Horn of Africa," University of Waterloo, Waterloo, Ontario, 21–23 November 1986. Roy Megarry, publisher of *The Globe and Mail*, recently remarked that "the information flow consists mainly of western journalists observing what is transpiring around the globe through their western eyes and their western perspectives and their western value systems, and reporting back not just to the West, but to the rest of the world . . . Not to be aware of the benefits of a two-way information flow is the ultimate in stupidity. To be aware of the discrepancy and to do nothing about it is the ultimate in arrogance." Roy Megarry, "Communications in a Global Society," 1986.

> cess . . .despite the importance of communications in their work, relatively few NGOs have a well-developed communications strategy, or a comprehensive understanding of the role of communications in development.[4]

It is a cliché that communications technology has shrunk the globe, and that it has become possible to talk to each other as never before in human history. By and large, NGOs have lagged behind in recognizing this and turning it to their advantage. They have made little use of mass media (with the exception of one or two large fundraising agencies such as OXFAM-Quebec and World Vision); their contacts with overseas partners tend to be periodic and one-way, and most have done little to develop independent sources of information that would shape a distinctive view of the world.

Some steps are now being taken. In 1987, an NGO project placed an experienced journalist in Harare for two years to furnish interested agencies with timely, relevant information about the rapidly changing situation in Southern Africa. The guidelines for projects funded by Partnership Africa Canada encourage more direct and explicit cooperation between funding and development education agencies, in order to disseminate more first-hand knowledge of steps being taken (by Africans as well as Canadians or others) to tackle the problems of that continent. Some U.S. private voluntary organizations have begun to experiment with low-level satellites and amateur radio to facilitate contact with project holders in remote locations overseas. In Canada, a number of voluntary agencies involved in development, environment, peace and social justice issues have begun to set up a computerized 'bulletin board' called AlterNET to share information.[5] Such computer-assisted communication systems could facilitate low-cost, flexible, and interactive messaging, conferencing and data retrieval, cutting across the barriers of geography or specialization.

Efficient long-distance communications and information-sharing is essential in a country as large and thinly populated as Canada, but the skills, once learned, could also be transferred to partners in the South. The prospect this opens is that of direct contact and communication between North and South – not just the 'official' version of events transmitted by governments, nor the approved message mediated by NGOs or others 'interpreting' what people should hear – but a global switchboard through which people can talk to each other. This still sounds utopian, but increasingly the technology exists to make it possible. Already, a computer link-up for elementary students is being explored by a Cana-

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[4] IDERA/Inter Pares, *Final Report on Phase 1.*

[5] *See* "Global Village Notice Board: Using Computer Assisted Communications," *Tribute*, 1:3 (1986).

dian NGO in cooperation with the UNESCO Man in the Biosphere program: the beginnings of the global classroom!

Technology is no more than a means, however, to facilitate communication. For it to be really useful, NGOs must first decide – based on their own experience – what they have to say, how important it is for Canadians to hear their message, and how willing they are to serve as a channel for people in the South to voice their interests and concerns directly to Canadians.

Advocacy: Begging to Differ

A direct implication of real autonomy is freedom; in the case of NGOs, freedom to express an independent or alternative view of the world. Sometimes this involves direct advocacy intervention in government policy making.

Policy making in Canada, as in any pluralistic, democratic society, is a matter of weighing options, balancing interests, and making choices between conflicting viewpoints and values. Some of this is open, articulated through the political process and the rigorous competition of the various sectors, but much is hidden – in inter-departmental committees, in the caucus of the ruling party, and in the work of lobbyists engaged to press the views and interests of groups ranging from professional associations to industry, small business, charities and farmers. As government's role in society and the economy has expanded, there has been a proportionate increase in lobbying. (However, the policy-making process in Canada has always been relatively more insulated from public pressure than is the case in the U.S. – the result of a more disciplined party structure, and the relatively fewer number of leverage points in a parliamentary as opposed to Congressional system).

Within this play of opposing forces Canadian voluntary development agencies have been notably ambivalent about how to play a role in policy making and indeed the legitimacy of their seeking to influence policy at all. Whose interests do they represent, and when is their intervention in the policy-making process justified? A small number (15 percent of questionnaire respondents) view advocacy as an integral part of their mandate – in the words of Tim Draimin of the Jesuit Centre in Toronto, "taking up cudgels on behalf of the Third World." Many of these are research and solidarity groups with strong links to their areas of interest and clearly identified expertise. But over half the agencies surveyed (56 percent) reported that they attached little importance to policy advocacy.

Such reluctance to engage in advocacy appears to have little to do with financial autonomy. Although it might be assumed that an NGO's ability, and willingness, to engage the government on policy issues would be in

inverse proportion to its dependence upon that government for funding, (not biting the feeder's hand has always seemed like good sense as well as good politics) in fact questionnaire responses show no correlation between level of government funding and an agency's support for advocacy. Many specialized groups which concentrate on policy research and advocacy (such as LAWG and GATT-Fly) receive little or no government money, but some of the most consistent and vocal advocates within the NGO community are among the most dependent on official funding. Indeed, the NGOs' chief vehicle for such work, CCIC, is itself heavily government-supported.[6]

Why do NGOs disagree so strongly over speaking out on policy issues? The majority insist that their responsibility as humanitarian agencies is to respond to human need wherever and whenever it arises. Development is helping individuals, families, and communities, not a matter of overarching structures or systems. 'Political' or controversial activities may impede effectiveness, in their view, in two ways: first, by taking a public stance, they may be cut off from those they seek to help, and who may most need that help; and second, a public stance may be unpopular in Canada and alienate actual or potential supporters. Reluctance to engage in advocacy is chiefly due to the perception that it is invariably confrontational, and may therefore alienate individual donors, not government. Buttressing this viewpoint, until recently, was an anachronistic interpretation of laws regarding 'political' activity by charities: while charities could prepare briefs or make representations to a Minister or his/or her staff, they were prohibited from actually undertaking any action in support of their goals (such as organizing a letter-writing campaign, or suggesting legislative changes). To some, it appeared to be the difference between merely seeking to influence, and actually being effective. New legislation in February 1986 established the terms whereby charities could carry out advocacy which is 'ancillary and incidental' to their charitable objectives, on condition that 'substantially all' of their resources are devoted to the charitable purposes for which they were created (defined as at least 90 percent, over a five-year period). This less restrictive provision goes a

[6] This is entirely consistent with a long-standing tradition in Canada (as elsewhere, including the Scandinavian countries and the Netherlands) of government support for public policy development (for the women's movement, anti-poverty organizations, environmental groups, etc.) On the other hand, a 1985 study argues that in recent years CCIC's advocacy has avoided broader development issues and focused instead almost exclusively on NGO/CIDA relations, and furthermore, that this results from both the Council's (and NGOs') growing dependence on government and the consequent overriding need to maintain harmonious relations. John S. Clark, "Canadian Non-Governmental Organizations and their Influence on Canadian Development Policy," (Working Paper No. A.17) Department of Political Science, University of Toronto, October 1985, p. 59.

long way toward updating charitable law to bring it into line with practices current since governments adopted a major role in welfare and service delivery.[7]

The counterargument that development is about values, choices and the allocation of resources, and hence inherently 'political,' confronts the reality of a public perception that NGOs are first and foremost humanitarian bodies and that changing public policy is not integral to their task of improving the quality of life for poor people. It is the clash of two paradigms: development as 'out there' problems facing others, vs development as interdependence. This schism is most obvious in those agencies which act primarily as fundraisers for a foreign-based parent organization and which shy away from controversy. Paradoxically, some of those parent organizations themselves are becoming increasingly outspoken in challenging official development thinking and practice. Cases in point are the CARE head office in New York, which has recently become involved for the first time in significant development education activity in the U.S., and UNICEF, which has challenged the IMF on the impact that World Bank and IMF-imposed adjustment policies have had, and are having, on the Third World poor.

New Opportunities in Advocacy

But advocacy is *not* invariably confrontational. Having a viewpoint on development issues, even if it disagrees with the government's position, need not imply sterile negativism. In fact, government has increasingly solicited the views of NGOs – in part because aid policies have come under scrutiny by Parliament and government departments, and in part because NGOs' claims to a special role (and special support) are being justified to a large extent by their expertise, detailed knowledge of Third World problems, and particular perspective on development. It is striking how often hearings of the Commons Committee on External Affairs and Defence (now External Affairs and International Trade) have devoted a disproportionate share of the limited time they spend examining ODA to that very restricted share of CIDA resources channelled to the voluntary sector and – to the ill-concealed irritation of senior CIDA staff – have held up small-scale NGO projects as examples for CIDA to emulate. Not surprisingly, therefore, parliamentary enquiries have increasingly sought input or

[7] Note that this is not the only area where charity law had become anachronistic in the view of international development agencies. In 1978, several NGOs were challenged by Revenue Canada officials on the grounds that they were engaged in illegal activities in sending money to groups overseas who were not 'qualified donees' (a restricted category of permissible recipients, such as other registered charities or government bodies) while not retaining direct control of the funds and/or holding title to any property or materials shipped or purchased abroad. The issue was allowed to drop when it was pointed out that these "illegal" practices were virtually universal in the NGO community, and were furthermore supported and encouraged by another arm of the federal government, CIDA!

response from the NGO community. While in 1970 only two NGOs – CUSO and a coalition of church groups – appeared before the Senate Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs' enquiry into Canada-Caribbean relations, a decade later 11 agencies presented written statements and a further seven appeared before the Parliamentary Task Force on North-South Relations. Most recently, the House of Commons Standing Committee on External Affairs and International Trade (the Winegard Committee) attracted over 50 submissions from the NGO community and an equal number were called to appear in person before the Committee. This does not include numerous local solidarity and peace groups which also presented briefs. These successive enquiries have provided an opportunity for NGOs to influence Canada's policy, but at the same time have placed a considerable burden on their staff, who are usually ill-equipped to research and draft credible statements on the wide range of issues under review.

The effectiveness of advocacy for NGOs depends both on the quality and credibility of their positions, and on the 'clout' they are presumed to wield as representing a substantial body of public opinion. On both counts Canadian agencies have tended to be weak. Given the limited resources and ambivalent attitude toward advocacy of most agencies, it is not surprising that few are able to research or monitor policy issues, let alone develop alternatives. As a result briefs are frequently submitted which skirt the contentious and complex issues to focus on the familiar and straightforward: lobbying for increased support for the NGOs themselves.

The Role of CCIC In Advocacy

A weak knowledge base (compounded by limited contact with research bodies, educational institutions, or even the considerable number of students from Third World countries in Canada at any particular time), allied to the fact that many agencies lack a real constituency on whose behalf they could presume to speak, makes it logical for NGOs to look to CCIC to play a pre-eminent role in advocacy. This has a number of advantages: CCIC advocacy gains credibility because of the clear implication that a given position represents the collective view of most, if not all, NGOs; CCIC is more capable of sustained research on specific topics than an individual agency (and serves a useful educational function within the NGO community as issues are ventilated within the committees and councils of CCIC); and, not least, it distances agencies from potentially controversial topics. In theory, CCIC can afford to be more outspoken than any single agency or small group.

Or can it? In fact, while CCIC's membership has long given priority to its role in maintaining and monitoring 'government relations' there have been sharp differences as to when a public CCIC stance is either justified

or desirable. The increasing interaction between the government and the non-governmental sectors has heightened membership demands on CCIC for information on policy shifts, personnel changes, etc., within CIDA; indeed, this area of the Council's work received the highest approval rating in a 1984 evaluation of CCIC.[8] Broad support also existed for CCIC's 1979 Policy Paper, which expressed for the first time a collective NGO viewpoint on the major aid and foreign policy issues facing Canada. But once CCIC moves beyond general statements of principle to tackle specific issues the fragile consensus is likely to fracture. CCIC's role in helping NGOs to lobby in their own self-interest is universally accepted by its membership: advocating policy changes which would benefit others is not.

In this the Council simply reflects the divergent views of its membership, with their differing conceptions of development. Individual members with significant clout, such as the churches or the Canadian Labour Congress, often prefer to express their views directly to government, while others with strongly held views or particular expertise grow frustrated by the slowness of the consensus-building process in CCIC and the often diluted stances that emerge from it. In 1983, after a bruising debate between proponents and opponents of a vigorous public advocacy profile for CCIC, the Council formulated an Advocacy Policy to establish clear rules and procedures guiding the adoption of public stands. But such a policy by itself cannot create a common understanding of development, nor of the priority issues to be addressed, nor does it necessarily confer credibility. Too often, the Council's policy pronouncements have been unfocused, reactive, and poorly researched. Credibility suffers when an issue is important to only a few members, or when an issue is taken up but no consistent lobbying follows, or when an issue is poorly researched and presented. What is often not appreciated is that this lack of credibility affects not just CCIC but the whole Canadian NGO community.

It is easier for the Council to address relatively limited issues with clear desired outcomes; in 1978, for example, the Council successfully lobbied against the proposed imposition of countervailing duties on Tanzanian sisal. Complex, long-term issues, on the other hand, require a sustained commitment. CCIC has presented briefs opposing patenting of genetic resources and changes in drug patent policy, arguing the negative impact these would have on poor countries; but in both cases, follow-up work was carried out by the provincial councils in Saskatchewan and Manitoba respectively, as CCIC's attention was drawn to other issues.

One example of effective advocacy is the Election Priorities Project, a national campaign conceived and planned by the Development and Disarmament working group of CCIC prior to the 1984 federal election. A well-

[8] Coopérative d'Animation et de Consultation, *Evaluation of CCIC: Final Report*, p. 38.

documented kit was widely distributed in each riding and to all candidates, containing information on major topics of interest to the development and peace constituencies and a questionnaire. Seventy of the candidates who responded were elected to the House of Commons, and 12 were appointed to the Cabinet. It was no doubt worthwhile for these political figures (and the unsuccessful candidates) to have been asked their views on major issues of global development and justice, and in the process reminded that such matters are of concern to ordinary voters; but the real success of the project lay in the long-term contacts that were built across the country and the practical organizing experience gained by people in the development and peace communities.

If NGOs have placed greater emphasis on their public relations lobbying and rather less on their advocacy work, this may reflect the prevailing division of labour in the Canadian NGO community: national, fundraising agencies look after the former, with a steady eye on their need for continuing political support and a strong donor constituency, while small, relatively specialized research and solidarity groups, chronically under-funded, do the latter. Increasingly, however, knowledgeable observers are pointing to an emerging role and responsibility for Northern NGOs to become actively engaged in the policy process around development options and strategies. As Marcel Massé, now Canadian executive director at the IMF, remarked to a conference on NGOs hosted by CUSO and the North-South Institute in October 1986:

> The role of NGOs has got to be seen in terms of a much wider picture, a much greater number of influences that go to create or prevent development . . .the more we learn about the way the economy of the world works, the clearer it becomes that what Secretary Baker does about the budget deficit in the U.S. and what the Group of 5 does about exchange rates and interest rates are more important determinants of what is going to happen to the production of sorghum and millet in a small village in Senegal than almost any other policy.[9]

Agricultural training, credit for small farmers, improvements in technology, and so forth, all remain important and must continue to be assisted through NGO programs – but a real concern with the prospects and well-being of the Senegalese farmer demands that Northern agencies begin to play a role in pushing for appropriate policies on the part of national governments and international institutions. Willingness to reflect critically on the 'macro' issues as well as to work for improvement on the 'micro' issues is also a measure of NGOs' independence and their

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[9] CUSO/North-South Institute, "Conference on Non-Governmental Organizations in International Development: Mobilisation, Partnership and Effectiveness," Ottawa, 1986, pp. 3-5.

maturity. NGOs, if truly motivated to work with and assist the poor, will have to demonstrate as much commitment to advocacy on their behalf as they have shown to lobbying on their own.

Impact of Government Funding on Autonomy

The most basic form of government support to the voluntary sector is through the tax relief which most NGOs, as registered charities, can provide to their donors. This is support which is 'blind,' in that it is available to all *bona fide* charities regardless of their particular charitable objective, their effectiveness, or the extent to which they fit governmental priorities. It is a not inconsiderable support to private fundraising and represents a substantial 'hidden' contribution by the state.

More focused and explicit government support for NGOs' development work has been available since 1968 through CIDA's responsive program, administered by the NGO and ICDS divisions. In Chapter 3 it was pointed out that Canada ranks second among OECD members in the proportion of ODA channelled through NGOs. As the overall volume of financial transfers from CIDA to the voluntary sector has grown, many observers have expressed the view that the independence of NGOs is being eroded.[10] As Figure 4.1 shows, the majority of NGOs now receive more than half their funding from government sources. For development education groups, dependence on government funds is high but relatively stable; for agencies with overseas programs, the level of dependence is lower, but has increased markedly over the past decade.

Overseas Programs

Although the responsive program administered by CIDA's Special Programs Branch has doubled as a share of ODA, from 3.9 percent to 8 percent between 1976-77 and 1985-86, it has remained remarkably constant as a proportion of NGO income. Over the same period, however, the proportion of government funding increased from 40.9 percent of NGO revenues to 48.6 percent (see Table 4.1). The difference is almost entirely due to the development of new funding channels, particularly contracts and so-called country focus projects, through which CIDA's bilateral branches have over the past decade channelled substantial resources directly to NGOs. The concerns expressed in recent years about the impact of increased government funding on NGO autonomy refer most properly to these new sources, although the level of financial dependence has also increased for some agencies without bilateral funding. Have these new funding sources in fact diminished NGO autonomy?

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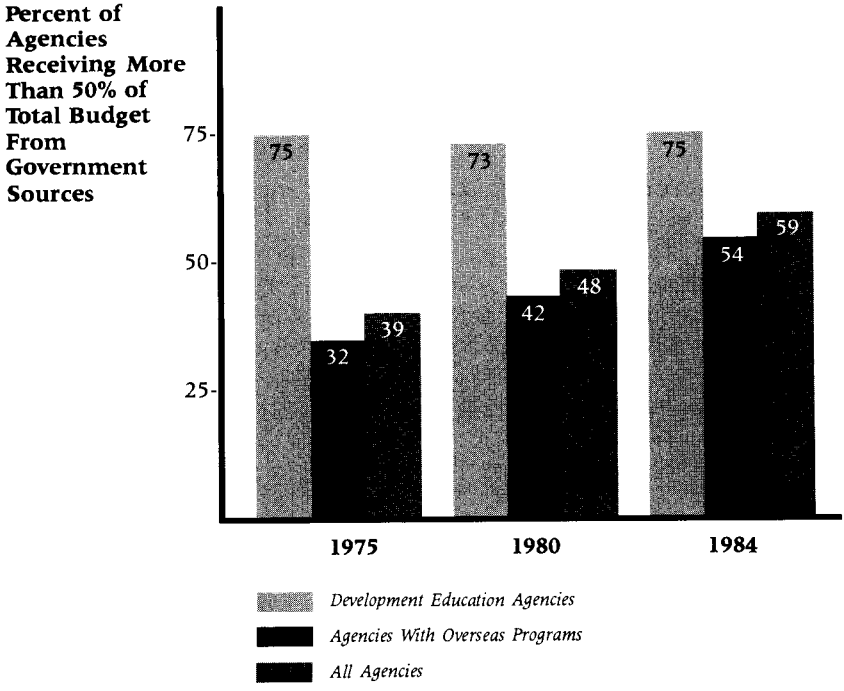
[10] See, for example, Canada, House of Commons, Standing Committee on External Affairs and International Trade, *Discussion Paper on Issues in Canada's Official Development Assistance Policies and Programs*, Ottawa, July 1986, pp. 14-15.

Figure 4.1

Levels of Dependence on Government Funding



Bilateral Contracts

Bilateral contracts, which normally are awarded through a competitive bidding process, differ from responsive funding in two critical ways: the implementing agency (NGO) does not itself make a financial contribution, and program priorities are entirely set by the funding agency, CIDA. The first substantial bilateral contracts were awarded to NGOs in 1978, but it was not until 1982 that they became significant in terms of numbers of projects or volume of funding. By mid-1984 12 NGOs held 25 active service contracts with a total value of over $19 million; in 1986, the number of agencies involved had shrunk to eight, holding 19 contracts with a total value of $20.6 million. As Table 4.2 shows, the rate at which contracts are being awarded has also slowed, reportedly as a result of CIDA concern about the absorptive capacity of the NGOs involved, and complaints from private commercial firms that non-profit organizations are competing unfairly for CIDA business. (It should be noted that contracts being executed by NGOs represent less than 2 percent of total active

Table 4.1

Canadian NGOs: Revenue by Source
(percent of total)

Source	1975 (n = 65)	1980 (n = 87)	1984 (n = 98)
CIDA – Regular Program	35.9	35.0	35.4
CIDA – Bilateral (country focus, contracts)	—	1.2	7.8
Other Federal Government	0.1	0.2	1.9
Provincial Government	4.9	7.1	3.5
Subtotal, Government	40.9	43.5	48.6
Corporate Donations	3.0	3.0	1.7
Foundation Donations	0.9	0.5	1.0
Individual Donations	44.1	41.7	37.7
Other[a]	11.1	11.1	11.1
Subtotal, Private	59.1	56.3	51.5
TOTAL	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**

[a] The types of revenue included under this category vary from agency to agency. For the most part, it includes contracts with international agencies, grants from other NGOs, and, in some cases, self-generated income (proceeds from fundraising events).

Source: Questionnaire responses. In a few cases, reference years may vary. Totals may not add, due to rounding.

CIDA service contracts[11] and, most importantly, that 80 percent of all contracts held by NGOs are being executed by one agency, WUSC.) Given the costs associated with preparing bids, few agencies are now willing or able to tender for CIDA contracts; consequently, this will continue to be a source of income for only a very few. In fact, the perception that NGOs are engaged in direct competition with the for-profit sector may reduce the availability of contracts to *any* agency as the government yields to private sector pressure to reserve contracts for commercial firms. This could also have the effect of excluding a significant source of relevant expertise from whole sectors of development work contracted out by CIDA.

[11] A further $75.2 million, or 7 percent of the total, has been awarded to educational institutions; these (and crown corporations like the Ontario International Corporation), are the more significant competition for the private sector.

Table 4.2

Active CIDA Service Contracts to Canadian NGOs

	As of 30 June 1984	As of 1 September 1986
Number of Contracts	25	19
Number of Agencies	12	8
Value of Contracts ($ thousands)	19,021	20,623
Number of Contracts Approved Within Previous 24 Months (percent of total)	16 (64.0)	10 (52.6)
Value of Contracts Approved Within Previous 24 Months ($ thousands) (percent of total)	13,143 (69.1)	7,046 (34.2)

Source: 1986 data taken from CIDA. *Active Service Contracts and Current Lines of Credit, Autumn 1986* Hull, 1986; 1984 data supplied by Contracts Division, CIDA. Contracts under $10,000 were excluded. Figures do *not* include contracts with universities, colleges or professional associations.

Country Focus Funding

A more significant new channel of government funding of NGOs opened up as a result of CIDA's adoption of a 'country focus' policy in 1981. Championed by Marcel Massé, then the president of CIDA, the country focus approach was an explicit attempt to offset the limitations of the typically large-scale, capital-intensive bilateral projects directly administered by CIDA. As such, the new policy expressed convictions already embodied in the NGO approach to development. In Massé's explanation, country focus

> consists in defining what the objectives of our intervention in a given country should be, and then determining which channel of intervention available to the Agency is the most efficient. Then we choose it, we fund it, and we hope it [development] happens.[12]

[12] At a meeting with NGO representatives in Ottawa in February 1982, Massé noted: "We've got a number of countries in CIDA where we have given locomotives, however, we have learned slowly that this is not necessarily a good kind of project, because if the locomotives are used just 28 percent or 30 percent of the time, you've got a good project in terms of transfer of funds, or transfer of goods and services, but you do not have a good project in terms of the 'development' effect in the country itself. . .". He went on to say that this "simple" lesson had only been recognized by the World Bank in 1980, when it concluded for the first time in its *World Development Report* for that year that the rate of return on investment in human resource development (such as health, training, and so on) is often higher than that of investment in physical goods and resources. See Maureen Hollingworth, *Consultation on Country Focus: Report on the Proceedings of the NGO-CIDA Meeting, 17 February 1982* (Ottawa: CCIC, March 1982), Appendix A, p. 3-4.

The policy shift inside CIDA sowed confusion at the lower levels of the bureaucracy, but also unleashed a new creativity among those frustrated by the lack of results achieved by more conventional government-to-government aid projects.

For CIDA planners this opened the door to new types of programming at the grassroots which hitherto CIDA could not have managed, and new flexibility in using NGOs, universities, or other institutions and firms as delivery channels. For NGOs it meant the potential of dramatically increased resources for their programs and projects, where these fitted into CIDA's country priorities. Country focus projects were not only larger than most responsive program projects, but also offered matching funding ratios of up to 9 to 1, as opposed to the maximum 3 to 1 available through responsive channels.

The discussion over country focus which took place through 1982 between CIDA and the NGOs provided an opportunity to re-state the terms of their 15-year old relationship. Was the purpose of the new policy to enhance NGOs' capacity to respond to development needs as perceived by them, or to 'use' the NGOs as an efficient delivery mechanism in order to meet CIDA's program goals? In the face of NGO anxiety that this shift would lead to greater control harnessing them to CIDA's own objectives, the CIDA president asserted

> your usefulness to us is principally that you are outsiders, that you function differently, that you bring up ideas, projects and ways of operating that are not our ways. In other words, if you did not have that autonomy, it would be in CIDA's interest to create it and to keep you away from us.[13]

But while some NGOs perceived country focus as an opportunity and some saw it as essentially irrelevant to their work, many others viewed it as a threat to the traditionally 'responsive' nature of government support.[14] They expressed three principal concerns: that new and directive bilateral funding would gradually replace the matching-grant program; that because bilateral funding was not responsive, NGOs would be under pressure – which some would find hard to resist – to align their activities more closely to CIDA in their selection of countries and sectors; and, finally, that the scale and administrative demands usually associated with

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[13] *Ibid.*, p. 6.

[14] See, for example, CCIC, *Report of the Task Force on Government Funding*, Ottawa, 1982. One author argues that "the incipient involvement of NGOs in country-focus activities implies an extension and transformation of their role. The country-focus approach suggest a change in the essential characteristics of NGOs, as they take on the functions of quasi-governmental agencies for policy implementation." Martin Rudner, "The Evolving Framework of Canadian Development Assistance Policy," Brian Tomlin and Maureen Molot, eds., *Canada among Nations, 1984: A Time of Transition* (Toronto: Lorimer, 1985), p. 139.

bilateral projects could lead some NGOs to overextend themselves and eventually to become wholly dependent on continuing CIDA funding. To what extent have these concerns proved to be well-founded?

Overall Level of Government Funding: The growth of country focus funding has been nothing less than dramatic. Reliable figures on these disbursements have been difficult to collect, particularly since management responsibility for a project established before 1987 could rest either with Special Projects Branch or one of the four bilateral branches.[15] As of October 1986, 157 country focus projects were operational, having a total value of some $207 million. While this includes many projects managed by universities, colleges and professional associations, 1985-86 disbursements to NGOs included in this study were still in the order of $40 million, or equal to one-quarter of their funding from the responsive (matching grant) program (one-third if food aid, PPP and provincial government contributions are excluded).

There is little indication, however, that growth in country focus funding has been at the expense of the responsive program. In the four years preceding the introduction of country focus funding (1976-77 to 1980-81), the responsive program (excluding food aid, PPP and provincial government contributions), grew at an average annual rate of just under 5 percent in real terms; in the four years following the introduction of country focus, the comparable figure was over 11 percent.[16] A number of variables could explain the higher rate of growth in recent years (for example, pressure on bilateral desks to disburse unspent funds in a given year, resulting in their transfer to the responsive program). Yet it is clear that rather than pushing out responsive funding, country focus funds resulted from a general receptivity to NGO initiatives within CIDA, which was felt in both responsive and bilateral programs.

This receptivity may not endure. The present trend appears to be toward a gradual decrease in country focus disbursements; Table 4.3 indicates a decline in the rate at which country focus projects are approved. This reflects pressures from CIDA's bilateral branches on available funds for projects which they have identified themselves, as well as from the

[15] In 1986, CIDA altered its guidelines, so that in future all country focus projects would be managed by the bilateral branches.

[16] In 1985/86, growth rates for the responsive program slowed somewhat. In large measure, however, this was due to the Progressive Conservative government's freeze on discretionary funding in the last three months of the fiscal year, not an independent decision by CIDA.

commercial sector.[17] At the same time, two further trends are apparent. First, there is a concentration in the number of agencies receiving country focus projects: perhaps only 25 of the more than 200 included in the terms of reference for this study have received such support. Within this restricted number there is an even greater concentration: as of 1987 50 percent of the country focus projects approved by the NGO division, by value, were being implemented by just two agencies, CARE and UNICEF; while in ICDS 75 percent of the projects by value (excluding universities, colleges and professional associations) were with WUSC, CUSO and CECI. Second, as Table 4.3 shows, there is a parallel trend toward larger projects. In short, country focus funding will likely go to fewer agencies and larger projects in future.

NGO Priorities: While the logic of the country focus approach suggested that CIDA's goals and priorities would be the basis for deciding on projects, and that CIDA's role in planning would therefore be paramount, in practice the door was left open to NGOs to bring forward projects which they or their Southern partners had developed. Experience to date reveals that country focus projects have originated in one of four ways: an existing NGO project has been renewed, extended or 'scaled-up'; an agency has introduced a project itself (usually a larger one than would normally be funded from SPB's own budget); CIDA has made known its interests or priorities in a given area, and awaited responses from NGOs; and, finally, a CIDA bilateral official has designed a project and then sought an NGO willing and able to execute it. It is the last category, especially, and to a lesser extent the third, that has raised anxiety that voluntary sector programming would be dictated by official priorities. In fact, of 35 country focus projects administered through the NGO division between 1982 and 1986, for example, 29 (83 percent) were initiated by NGOs, not CIDA. (The extent to which projects have been initiated by CIDA may be higher for projects managed by the bilateral branches.) This would suggest that rather than distorting an agency's objectives, as many initially feared,[18] bilateral funding has allowed some agencies to increase the scale of their projects beyond the level possible using only donor funds or matching grants.

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[17] John Watson, then operations director of WUSC, argued at a January 1987 consultation between CIDA and NGO representatives that "the country focus mechanism is dead as far as new NGO-initiated projects are concerned . . . . The only country focus initiatives likely to come to fruition in the current climate are projects that are wholly initiated by CIDA, which cannot, for some special reason be implemented by a private firm, or renewals of existing country focus NGO projects." John Watson, "Diversity of Funding Channels: Presentation to the NGO/CIDA Consultation," WUSC, Ottawa, no date, pp. 3-4.

[18] In questionnaire responses, the main reason given by NGOs who had not sought country focus funding was the concern that it might distort their own goals or priorities.

Table 4.3

Country Focus Projects Approved and Planned

	Projects Approved			Projects in the Planning Stage
	1984-85	1985-86	1986-87 (to October 1986)	(as of October 1986)
Number of Projects (percent of all bilateral projects)	93 (47.0)	63 (14.9)	34 (13.8)	27 (16.5)
Value of Projects ($millions) (percent of all bilateral projects)	50.0 (7.2)	62.0 (5.8)	40.0 (4.6)	47.0 (4.0)
Average Value of Projects ($millions)	0.5	1.0	1.2	1.7

Source: Data supplied by Special Programs Branch, CIDA, 26 November 1986. Country focus projects include those with universities, colleges, and professional associations.

The possibility of gaining access to bilateral funds could still lead an agency to pursue, expand, or modify a project beyond a desirable size or level. But as a partial safeguard, as well as tangible evidence of NGO 'ownership,' the implementing NGO, if it is a project funding agency with resources of its own, is usually required to contribute a proportion of the project budget.[19] Of the 35 projects mentioned above, all but two entailed a financial contribution from the implementing NGO; the average contribution was around 10 percent, but 11 of the projects were 25 percent or more funded by the NGO. Since many of the project budgets were over $1 million, even a relatively small contribution represented in some cases a major commitment of an agency's own funds. The average level of financial contribution is probably lower for agencies funded by ICDS, which are generally less able to raise funds from the public. But the general lesson is clear; as the 1986 Desmarais report on CIDA notes, NGOs have in large measure treated country focus as "another program receptive to their financing demands, in other words as **another special program**."[20] Nor is there evidence that country focus funding has caused NGOs to alter their country or sector priorities radically: not surprisingly, CIDA has chosen in almost all cases to support agencies with a proven track record in a given area.

[19] This was a strong recommendation of the CCIC Task Force on Government Funding. See pages 17-18 of the report.

[20] Task Force on Canada's Official Development Assistance Program, *Study of the Policy and Organization of Canada's Official Development Aid: Report to the Minister for External Relations* (Hull: CIDA, August 1986), p. 9 (emphasis in original).

NGO Dependency: As we have shown, significantly greater bilateral funding has not either constricted the regular matching grant program, nor skewed NGO priorities. The question remains whether the country focus initiative has led some agencies to neglect their own fundraising and planning so as to take advantage of CIDA funding. This is perhaps the most difficult issue to assess, but also the one where initial NGO fears appear to be the most warranted.

There is little doubt that country focus funding has increased the administrative burden on recipient NGOs that for the most part are accustomed to working with smaller projects and simpler approval processes. Country focus projects must go through the same procedures as any bilaterally-funded project, and these can often be onerous and time-consuming. To quote the Desmarais report again,

> some community development projects were studied for almost two years before the promised funding was actually granted. Governments in developing countries are accustomed to these kinds of delays, but the same cannot be said for rural communities or people's groups in the Third World. They end up not only tired of waiting but also begin to doubt the very credibility of their Canadian NGO partners.[21]

It is worth repeating that for NGOs, loss of autonomy may be the result of other than financial considerations. To a much greater extent than with the responsive program (and increasingly, since CIDA personnel at bilateral country desks now manage the majority of such projects directly) country focus projects require familiarity with CIDA priorities and procedures. This consultation with CIDA and compliance with its requirements may come to displace an agency's relationships with the regular partners or the Third World groups with which it normally works.

In strict financial terms, the fact that very few agencies have sought country focus funding means that its impact on the voluntary development community as a whole is more limited than the volume of disbursements might suggest. Most of the project-funding agencies implementing country focus projects already have substantial privately raised funds or, like CARE, UNICEF, or the Aga Khan Foundation Canada, are linked to international organizations with access to other funds and an implementing capacity. The danger of losing autonomy is greater for agencies that have relied on country focus instead of addressing weaknesses in their own fundraising. As the flow of bilateral country focus funds to NGOs dries up, agencies that had hoped to use this source as a basis for planning their own programs or building their operational capacity will face a difficult adjustment. WUSC, and some others for example, have begun to look to multilateral organizations such as UNHCR to partially replace the

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[21] *Ibid.*, p. 10-11.

bilateral funding that fuelled their expansion in the late 1970s and early 1980s. But for most agencies this is not a viable alternative because they lack the necessary direct implementation capacity in the Third World.

For agencies that have come to depend on country focus and other bilateral funding for a large percentage of their budgets, the inevitable result of financial dependence is vulnerability – in this case, to changes in CIDA's funding policies and priorities. To a degree, however, the same lesson may apply to the broader NGO community. In recent years, there has been a proliferation of special funding arrangements through which CIDA has encouraged NGOs to undertake certain kinds of projects or to work in countries of priority to CIDA: special funds for Africa, South Asia, or the Philippines, or for immunization programs or women's projects. Indeed, as country focus and bilateral contract disbursements stabilize or decline in coming years, the pattern of CIDA funding of NGOs may come to be centred on such hybrid initiatives, neither completely responsive nor totally directive.

Such funding channels allow NGOs more autonomy in deciding program priorities than they have with direct bilateral contracts or country focus arrangements, but they spring from the same broad CIDA concern: to improve its ability to meet its own objectives. Of course Canadian NGOs face no compulsion to participate other than the 'subtle' inducement of available funding, but once involved they must accept conditions regarding the sector or region of programming, and may have to work with local agencies designated by CIDA. As a result, instead of analyzing development needs overseas for themselves, and orienting their priorities and programs accordingly, NGOs are tempted to change course to take advantage of more readily available funds. They can be expected to grow increasingly reliant on CIDA in this way, especially as CIDA's field capacity grows, unless they improve their ability to assess needs through their own field staff and/or local partners. In that case, although overall government funding of a particular organization may increase, it will be at the cost of its internal coherence and operational autonomy.

On the other hand, the proliferation of funding channels offers NGOs a measure of protection in that they can diversify their funding sources and 'hedge their bets' against future CIDA cutbacks. But they are still vulnerable to broad CIDA policy shifts. While the past decade has seen a growing government appreciation of the NGO sector, both in Canada and elsewhere, there is no guarantee that it will endure indefinitely. The need to balance popularity in government circles with effective mobilization of their own resources is a lesson that NGOs ignore at their peril.

Development Education: Funding and Autonomy

Traditionally, NGOs concentrating exclusively on development education have had limited financial resources; their work as a result has been characterized by low salary levels and rudimentary facilities. Although a few groups (e.g., LAWG, GATT-Fly, the Inter-Church Committee on Human Rights in Latin America) have made a deliberate decision not to accept government funds, many rely heavily on official support. In 1984, of 24 agencies for which data was available, 75 percent depended for more than half of their total budget on government sources. CIDA funding, through the Public Participation Program, also finances a large share of the development education programming of agencies with overseas projects (which presumably have a greater fundraising capacity). Unlike these groups, agencies concentrating exclusively on development education in Canada cannot diversify their funding base by appealing to a variety of CIDA funding 'windows': federal development education funding for NGOs is limited to the PPP budget, and, more recently, Partnership Africa Canada, while already limited provincial support has been declining.

This heavy reliance on the PPP inevitably produces vulnerability to changes in the PPP budget and priorities, intensified by the year-to-year uncertainty of future funding.[22] While the program's budget has grown steadily in absolute terms since its inception, the level of funding per client has changed little in real terms, as the number of clients has expanded dramatically (see Table 4.4). As well, PPP must respond to requests from non-NGO sources, such as professional associations, universities and colleges, which in 1985-86 absorbed over 15 percent of PPP disbursements. Despite its growth since 1971-72, PPP's budget remains small in relation to other CIDA programs. In this era of slow growth in CIDA's overall budget, doubts persist that PPP, with a tiny staff and a widely dispersed constituency, has the clout within CIDA to increase, or even maintain, its share of aid funds. There have been intimations that PPP may not survive at all as a separate entity, but may be amalgamated with CIDA's Public Affairs section, the agency's promotional arm.

It has long been axiomatic in the NGO community that it is next to impossible to raise private funds for development education. A 1982 CCIC report, for example, stated flatly that "it has proven unrealistic to expect that education can generate the necessary funds for its own perpetuation."[23] Stated often enough this moves from being an axiom to a self-fulfilling prophecy. Some agencies have nevertheless met the funding

[22] An additonal problem for PPP is the fact that with a small budget and a large client list, its flexibility in funding new initiatives, as opposed to ongoing programs, is limited.

[23] CCIC, *Report of the Task Force on Government Spending*, p. 14.

Table 4.4

CIDA-PPP Disbursements, 1971-72 – 1985-86

	1971-72	1980-81	1985-86
Total Amount Disbursed ($ thousands)	600.1	3,438.1	9,080.6
Number of Clients Funded	32	87	140
Average Disbursement per Client			
Current Dollars ($ thousands)	18.8	39.5	64.9
Constant (1981) Dollars ($ thousands)	43.2	40.8	49.6

Source: PPP client lists, 1980-81 and 1985-86. Conversions to constant dollars using CPI (all items).

challenge quite successfully. In Toronto, for example, the Development Education Centre (DEC) raises some 70 percent of its funds from non-governmental sources, largely from the revenues of its book and film distribution service, and has recently launched a direct mail campaign, as has Carrefour de Solidarité Internationale in Sherbrooke; other learner centres such as those in Calgary, (Arusha) and in London have found that, by expanding into multicultural education and immigrant resettlement work, they can tap new sources of federal and provincial financing. Obviously, not all agencies can adopt such strategies, particularly those in smaller communities, but some elements might apply. The Marquis Project in Brandon has increased its revenue by selling books, t-shirts, and posters from its office, while the Common Heritage Programme and some other school-based activities generate revenue from professional workshop fees, and sales of materials produced for classroom use.

Development education remains in a financially weakened state for two main reasons: namely, the difficulty of demonstrating *quantifiable* impact, and the lack of substantial support for development education activities from fundraising NGOs. With few exceptions agencies seldom support community-based education initiatives, partly because they do not get enough profile, partly because their own education work is intimately linked to fundraising and agency promotion, but also due to a simple reluctance to relinquish 'control' over an activity with some potential for risk, embarrassment, or worse, loss of image that would impact on fundraising.

For small groups with limited staff, the constant struggle for funds and the debilitating dependency upon one major donor, the federal government, undermine efforts to plan and foster attitudes of vulnerability and defensiveness. For Canada and the development community, investing in an

informed public opinion is important and requires a longer-term base of support with understood and accepted standards of performance and criteria of accountability.

Operational Autonomy: Relations with Third World Governments

Traditionally, Canadian and other foreign NGOs have enjoyed relatively easy access to many poor countries, and something approaching *carte blanche* for their operations. Where this has not been the case, they have simply stayed away. In some regions, particularly Francophone Africa, and in countries with centrally planned economies, the very concept of a non-governmental role in development was at one time strange and suspect: scarce resources and the need to reinforce fragile state institutions in the post-independence era left little room for pluralism; to officialdom, non-governmental sounded uncomfortably like antigovernmental! Acceptance of foreign NGOs, however, has since become more widespread. For poor countries they bring welcome resources (during the 1972-74 Sahel drought, for example, Mali, which had virtually no foreign NGOs, compared its situation with that of Upper Volta, now Burkina Faso, and reversed its earlier hostility). In recent years there has been rising pressure from donor countries and some multilateral institutions to give greater leeway to non-governmental initiatives.

The increasing financial presence of Northern NGOs, coupled with the emergence and growing strength of indigenous organizations, has inevitably drawn the attention of Southern governments. Their attitudes toward NGOs vary widely, depending upon the country and the regime in power, on a spectrum which ranges from minimal supervision through loose coordination, to restrictive regulation. But attitudes can shift quickly in response to domestic or international political changes. In Jamaica, for example, which had a laissez-faire approach, growing suspicion and hostility between government and NGOs culminated in a police quest for incriminating documents in the local office of a Canadian agency (none were found). In Peru, government-NGO relations were friendly after the election of the Garcia government in 1984 but deteriorated two years later when a Congressional enquiry was launched into the activities of selected Peruvian NGOs and their foreign backers. In Zimbabwe, too, troubles in Matabeleland in 1984 caused strains between foreign NGOs and the government.

For their part, most development agencies have resolutely kept at arm's length from local governments, fearing possible political interference, red tape, or manipulation to partisan advantage. Regimes indifferent to the welfare of their populations, especially those violating human rights, are especially threatening. Avoiding close contact with government allowed

NGOs to continue to work in Uganda throughout the period of Idi Amin's brutality, when official aid was stopped. Similarly, in Chile under Pinochet, in the Philippines under Marcos, in South Africa and Vietnam, NGOs remain active on the premise that people suffering oppression should not face the double penalty of losing all external support just when they have greatest need of it.

The problem for NGOs lies in determining when cooperation with a local government may either unduly restrict their autonomy, or be construed as support for that government's policies, or inadvertently assist repressive actions. In several countries, (Guatemala, El Salvador, Jamaica) Canadian agencies have objected to CIDA's use of counterpart funds (which in principle are under the control of the recipient government) to support indigenous NGOs, on the grounds that this could expose the local agencies to direct interference and even physical danger (see Chapter 7). But in other situations, an agency that distances itself from the government may be isolated; without government support its projects may become unsustainable and its compatibility with local development priorities put in doubt.

Indeed the survey of Canadian projects in the field conducted for this study revealed few examples of successful replication of activities, the main reason being the reluctance of sponsoring organizations to coordinate their work with the local government and with other development agencies. In part this reflects the lack of pressure on voluntary organizations to gear up their activities to affect large numbers of beneficiaries; in part their suspicion of working with powerful institutions, including government. In the long run, however, the objective of development agencies must be to enable the poor to confront powerful institutions like government and to make effective demands on them, rather than to isolate beneficiaries from the 'system' and in doing so create further dependencies.

Trends are now forcing a greater degree of cooperation between governments and NGOs: the increased resources of NGOs make them too prominent to be left alone, and bilateral and multilateral support for their projects normally requires the approval of local governments. Good relations are hampered, however, when Southern governments feel that NGOs are competing with them for donor resources, or if NGOs attempt to operate separate (or even competitive) service delivery mechanisms which are better endowed than those of local governments (which unlike NGOs, usually must spread their resources more thinly to accommodate as many people as possible).

There is also a need for more self-discipline and internal coordination among NGOs. In post-disaster situations, for example, outside agencies have often flooded into a country, imposing a considerable burden on

local structures.[24] The lack of effective coordinating mechanisms often leads to a seemingly endless succession of missions, visits and 'fact-finding' tours by outside agencies which make excessive demands on harrassed officials. Local coordinating NGOs have been set up in many countries, including Bangladesh, Burkina Faso, Mali, and Zimbabwe, forestalling the imposition of more top-down control by government, but it requires a real willingness to make these function effectively, particularly on the part of foreign NGOs who may prefer to rely on direct access to government officials or the backing of their own embassy when they have disagreements with local authorities.

Conclusion

NGOs fiercely defend their independence, yet in the past 10 years they have sought and received dramatically increased funding from government. They proudly point to their close ties to poor communities as the basis for their autonomy, but their information about them is often weak, intermittent, and indirect. They insist on their freedom to set their own priorities, yet are quickly drawn into new regions or types of programming by the prospect of additional funds. How can one explain these apparent paradoxes?

It is perhaps well to remember that NGOs also have institutional interests to protect, conflicting internal views to reconcile, and a difficult task of striving for organizational coherence while remaining responsive to a multitude of needs and pressures. Their freedom to function implies that NGOs can do what governments cannot, ought not, or will not do – supporting human rights for example, or working in politically 'difficult' areas like Eritrea, or asking questions about the impact of large-scale projects on the environment, and so on. But the *will* to do so derives not from some formalistic assertion of autonomy, nor even from independence from government money, but from a vision of development rooted in values and choices. It is this willingness to explore alternatives and to experiment with new initiatives which makes NGO autonomy valuable and worth protecting. In this sense Canadian NGOs are less at risk from the support they receive from CIDA than from a loss of internal vitality and self-questioning that can only come from agencies' direct work in the field. Autonomy is not so much a virtue to be guarded as a challenge to be met, and a principle to be exercised.

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[24] In its report on the African emergency relief operation, the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) states that the number of NGOs in the Sudan exploded from fewer than 20 before 1984 to some 160 at the height of the emergency. See International Institute for Environment and Development, *Report on the African Emergency Relief Operation, 1984-1986 with Particular Reference to the Contribution of Non-Governmental Organisations, and at the Request of the UN Office for Emergency Operations in Africa*, London, November 1986, p. 82.

5 Participation: Involving Canadians

> *If you look closely, you will see that almost anything that really matters to us, anything that embodies our deepest commitment to the way human life should be lived and cared for, depends on some form – most often, many forms – of volunteerism*
>
> – Margaret Mead

> *The right to participate is integrally linked to the right to learn. Individuals learn by participating in interactions with society; and society learns from the participation of groups and individuals in its activities. One measure of the potential for innovative learning in a society is its degree of effective participation. And from a global view, the potential for innovative learning in the world system as a whole hinges on the extent of participation at international as well as national and local levels*
>
> – No Limits to Learning: A Report to the Club of Rome

By definition, voluntary activity involves people. The legitimacy of voluntary organizations has always rested to a large degree on their links to the Canadian population, and they have flourished in proportion to their ability to harness the energy, skills, and commitment of individual Canadians. By implication, the degree of public participation is an important indicator of the strength and resilience of the NGO community.

Participation can take a variety of forms, depending upon both the personal preferences of those involved and on the nature of the organization. Many Canadians work for NGOs, either in Canada or overseas on a paid or volunteer basis; many more are involved indirectly, through their charitable donations. Finally, through the public education activities of various agencies, Canadians can learn about – and participate in – the process of international development.

Volunteers: The Human Touch

In Chapter 2, it was pointed out that a conservative estimate of the number of Canadians directly participating in the work of NGOs might be as high as 40,000, based on 1984 figures. Of this figure, the vast majority – perhaps 90 percent of the total – are volunteers.[1] Indeed, it is often claimed that the involvement of volunteers is one of the factors that sets

[1] These figures, drawn from questionnaire data, are in broad agreement with other available sources. A 1985 study of Alberta NGOs found that of 1,835 agency personnel (full- and part-time), 1,653 (90 percent) were volunteers. See Katherine Rechico, *Alberta NGO Economic Impact Study* (Edmonton: Alberta Agency for International Development, September 1986), pp. 6-7.

NGOs (and other voluntary agencies) apart from government or profit-making bodies. Nigel Martin, former executive director of CCIC, put it the following way:

> the NGO is an institution, a structured body, a legal entity. And yet, it is a physical embodiment of an ideal . . . The structure is set up to ensure participation around a mission by volunteers. The volunteers, amateurs, hire the professionals. Professionals give their advice, but the ultimate decisions are made by amateurs.[2]

Volunteers are involved in various ways, from serving on boards of directors to working on projects overseas. It is perhaps helpful to separate volunteers into two main groups – those working for an agency in Canada and 'cooperants' working overseas. The two groups are distinguished not only by where they work, but also by their conditions of employment. While the former are usually part-time and/or casual, the latter are almost invariably full-time, with overseas postings lasting from six months to several years. While the former are volunteers in the classic sense, working without remuneration (other than the travel and meal allowances provided by some agencies), most cooperants receive a small subsidy to cover living costs. This may be paid by the sending agency, a host agency or government, or some combination of the two; in other cases, individual cooperants raise funds from church or other sources to cover their expenses.

There is no necessary contradiction between professional staff and a voluntary structure. NGOs continue to believe that volunteers *are* important, not simply as a way to lower their costs but, more importantly, for the ongoing links they provide to the community. Yet there are growing questions as to the ability – and in some cases the willingness – of NGOs to integrate volunteers effectively into their organizations.

In-Canada Volunteers

The rapid growth of many NGOs over the past two decades has been accompanied by a growing 'professionalization.' Not only do agencies now have more money to hire trained, full-time professionals, but increased funding (particularly government funding) brings with it greater pressures for efficiency and accountability, and a consequent shift toward rule-based, systematized operations rather than *ad hoc* decision making.

This in turn puts a premium on continuity. In contrast to the 1960s and 1970s, when there was a rapid turnover of staff positions and a constant infusion of new employees, most NGOs are now characterized by a relatively stable employment pattern. Executive directors who responded to our questionnaire had held their current position for over five years on

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[2] Quoted in The Hunger Project, *A Shift in the Wind*, (October 1986), p. 8.

average, and had 11 years experience in non-governmental development work (nine with the present agency). CIDA's corporate evaluation of the NGO program notes a similar stability in project officers of agencies with overseas programs,[3] while a study of training needs among development education groups found that 48 percent of respondents had more than five years' experience in this field, and 83 percent at least two years.[4] As a result, agency employees are now more able to draw on past experiences to aid their work. Unfortunately, volunteers, often part-time or temporary, may not be able to offer the continuity and experience now demanded by NGOs. At the same time, changes in staffing structures have shifted the balance away from 'generalists' toward more specialized positions, further reducing the scope for volunteer input. As Table 5.1 shows, support and management positions made up some 72 percent of all in-Canada NGO staff in 1975, but by 1984 had fallen to only 63 percent; the decline was offset by an increase in more specialized 'professional' positions, particularly in project administration and development education.

As a result, there has been a gradual decline in the relative importance of volunteers in NGOs' in-Canada activities. Some agencies, particularly locally based learner centres or national agencies with a regional volunteer structure (e.g., CANSAVE, UNICEF) still rely on volunteer workers for a broad range of tasks, but this is no longer the case for many others. The days of entirely volunteer-staffed agencies are numbered: of 129 questionnaire respondents, only 11 (9 percent of the total) had no paid staff. The same trend is occurring in voluntary agencies in other fields as well: while the desire to volunteer remains high,[5] most studies agree that volunteer service is less prevalent than in earlier decades, because agencies provide fewer opportunities.[6]

The past decade has also witnessed the increasing marginalization of volunteers within NGO decision-making structures. Questionnaire re-

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[3] CIDA, *Corporate Evaluation Study of CIDA's Non-Governmental Organizations Program (Integrated Report)*, Hull, October 1986, pp. 43-45.

[4] Maria Giovannini, "Report on the Training of Development Education Workers in Canada: Final Report," prepared for PPP, CIDA, March 1985, p. 18.

[5] In a 1984 opinion poll, 25 percent of respondents claimed to have done volunteer work during the preceding year, but 49 percent indicated that they would have done such work if they had been aware of the need for assistance. See Canadian Gallup Poll Limited, *Financial Support for Non-Profit Organizations, 1984*, p. 112. A Statistics Canada study also notes a sizeable number of 'potential volunteers,' which it estimates at 3 percent of the working-age population. The study also found that in 70 percent of cases, 'inactive' volunteers (who had done volunteer work in the reference year but not the reference week) attributed this to lack of demand rather than personal reasons. Statistics Canada, "An Overview of Volunteer Workers in Canada," *The Labour Force*, pp. 84-85.

[6] Samuel A. Martin, *An Essential Grace: Funding Canada's Health Care, Education, Welfare, Religion and Culture* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1985), p. 205.

Table 5.1

Average Number of Staff per Agency, by Category

Category	Number of Staff 1975 (n = 88)		1984 (n = 116)	
Management	1.7	(28.3%)	2.5	(22.7%)
Support Staff	2.6	(43.3%)	4.4	(40.0%)
Project Administration	0.3	(5.0%)	1.2	(10.9%)
Development Education	0.5	(8.3%)	1.4	(12.7%)
Fundraising	0.3	(5.0%)	0.6	(5.5%)
Other	0.6	(10.0%)	0.9	(8.2%)
TOTAL	**6.0**	**(100.0%)**	**11.0**	**(100.0%)**

Source: Based on questionnaire data. In a few cases, reference year may vary.

sponses indicate that whereas some volunteers – particularly members of boards of directors – are extensively involved in various facets of agency business, (long-range planning, financial management, project selection, project administration, monitoring or evaluation, and fundraising), the vast majority of rank and file volunteers are most often involved in fundraising and development education. This is consistent with findings that show a clear discrepancy between types of volunteer work preferred and actual work performed in Canadian voluntary agencies in general. A 1984 Gallup poll found that while most volunteers would prefer to serve in decision-making postions on boards or committees, or take a direct part in programs and services, they are most commonly assigned fundraising and administrative/clerical tasks.[7] Yet as automation takes hold in NGO administration, and fundraising techniques such as direct mail solicitation require less labour and more specialized skills, even these areas of work may become less accessible to volunteer workers.

Overseas Cooperants

A narrowing of volunteer opportunities abroad has also occurred, as Third World countries gradually develop the human resources (teachers, health workers, etc.) formerly supplied by volunteer placement agencies such as CUSO or CECI. At the same time some agencies which formerly placed many Canadians overseas, have concluded that volunteer placements, at least in the traditional sense, may not be an effective or efficient means of assisting development efforts. A 1986 CUSO brief to a House of Commons committee examining Canadian aid policies stated that even

[7] Canadian Gallup Poll Limited, *Financial Support for Non-Profit Organizations, 1984*, pp. 108-110.

when cooperants live and work directly with local residents, "few are as effective as a qualified local person would be."[8] As a result, CUSO has moved toward hiring indigenous staff for their development projects, and now emphasizes project support as well as technical assistance. Despite an increase in cooperant placements by some other agencies, e.g., CECI, the overall level of Canadian cooperant placements has remained steady since the mid-1970s.

More significantly, the type of volunteer placed overseas has changed. In contrast to the 1960s and early 1970s, when the majority of volunteers were recent university graduates serving as teachers, volunteers now usually possess specialized skills and/or training (doctors, public health nurses, engineers, agronomists). The 'average' volunteer or cooperant is now both more highly skilled and older than was the case in the mid-1960s. In many cases they are mid-career professionals. For example, the average CECI or OCSD cooperant in 1985, was 35 years old with between 6.5 and 8 years of work experience. Other volunteer placement agencies (WUSC, CUSO, SUCO) note a similar change in the age and professional qualifications of cooperants.

Demand by Canadians to do volunteer work overseas, however, has continued to rise: in 1985-86, CECI received 1,369 applications, but selected only 92 applicants, less than 7 percent of the total.[9] A desire for adventure and a commitment to helping others is no longer enough to be selected to work overseas. This change can be seen in successive 'generations' of CUSO recruitment advertisements: a 1975 ad stated that "We don't offer much money, fringe benefits or promotional opportunities, we offer involvement"; by 1985, a similar ad called on readers to "share your skills overseas . . . gain a lifetime of experience," and promised a "generous benefits package." Youth exchange programs such as Canada World Youth and Canadian Crossroads International have filled some of the gap, but even the current level of over 500 participants annually in these programs cannot keep up with the demand from young Canadians.

The 'professionalization' of overseas volunteer positions is on the whole a positive step: it testifies to the improved human resource base of Third World countries. But it may also raise problems for some NGOs in the future. In the 1960s and 1970s, much of the dynamism of the voluntary development community was provided by recently returned volunteers – who now fill a large percentage of senior positions both in NGOs and in CIDA. The trend toward more experienced, and therefore older, cooperants in the field deprives NGOs of the constant infusion of new energy

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[8] CUSO, *Submission to the Standing Committee on External Affairs and International Trade on Canada's Official Development Assistance Policies and Programs*, December 1986, p. 12.

[9] *Le Devoir*, 19 May 1987. CIDA's evaluation of the NGO program also notes an increasing interest in volunteer work overseas; see CIDA, *Corporate Evaluation Study*, p. 45.

which returning volunteers brought to them in the past. On the other hand, although much value was ascribed to the educational impact of overseas experience (captured in CUSO's early motto "To serve and learn"), little systematic effort was made (with the exception of Canadian Crossroads) to support educational work by returned cooperants. It may be that more – albeit indirect – impact is being made now, as cooperants resume interrupted careers and introduce an international perspective into their varied workplaces.

New Strategies

In the end, this educational role may be the greatest argument in favour of continued and intensified efforts to involve Canadian volunteers, both overseas and within Canada. Clearly, the skills and experience of individual volunteers will still be valued, and financially strapped agencies will continue to rely on volunteer labour for many tasks. Although there may be difficulty and even extra cost in effectively integrating volunteers into agency structures, agencies may need to take a broader view of the benefits. Returned cooperants can help to provide the direct links to the Third World which many Canadian agencies, particularly those dedicated exclusively to development education, often lack. Volunteers also remain the most committed constituency for NGO work, providing not only a receptive audience for NGOs' educational messages, but also, if properly managed, an efficient way of spreading that message to the larger community. Fundraising agencies may be attracted by a slightly less altruistic motive: several studies have found that levels of charitable giving increase sharply with the amount of volunteer work performed.[10]

This is not to argue for a return to the days of exclusively amateur leadership, nor for a reversal of the trend in volunteer recruitment toward technical skills. But the involvement of volunteers is not necessarily in conflict with such trends. What are needed, rather, are more imaginative approaches to the involvement of Canadians.

On the domestic side, this means adopting a new attitude toward volunteers, one which sees them as a resource to be managed rather than simply mined. Too often in the past, as Helmut Kuhn of CANSAVE has noted, volunteers have been treated as "just another kind of donor"[11] – and in many cases given even less attention than donors, since volunteers are presumably already 'sold' on the merits of an agency. Volunteer coordinators may be needed, or, where resources do not permit the hiring of additional staff, training in volunteer coordination may be needed for existing paid staff. Training and professional development opportunities

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[10] See Martin, *An Essential Grace*, p. 207.

[11] Helmut Kuhn, "Volunteers in Canada," *CUSO Journal* (1986), p. 9.

should be offered as much as possible to volunteers as well as paid staff. Given the costs involved, the financial burden could be shared among smaller agencies through some form of collaboration. In Western Canada, the Prairie Windbreak conference has in recent years provided an effective regional training forum. Another option would be to fund 'roving' trainers to service smaller agencies. Most of all, there is a need to open up agency debates over policy and programs to non-paid staff, fostering a spirit of partnership between paid and volunteer staff. National agencies could move in this direction by creating or strengthening their regional structures in a way that would permit access points for volunteer participation.

As well, however, new avenues are needed to enable interested Canadians to experience overseas development work, perhaps through short postings which combine education and direct work experience – modelled on the Canada World Youth or Crossroads programs, but catering to older age groups, including agency staff and volunteers. Another possible model is offered by Jamaica Self Help, a small NGO based in Peterborough, Ontario, that supports the work of an indigenous agency in Kingston, Jamaica. Each year, the agency takes a small group of interested Canadians to Jamaica to work for a few weeks with its Jamaican partner, and arranges return visits by Jamaicans to Canada. Another program, funded by Crossroads and Inter Pares, linked young farmers belonging to the National Farmers' Union to counterparts in the Caribbean.

The impact of such programs on Canadian attitudes is clear: for example, an evaluation of Crossroads, dated February 1983, noted that the program had produced changes in the "awareness, acceptance of others and personal lifestyles" of participants, and also had a multiplier effect as returnees spoke to other groups and individuals, and volunteered their time to Crossroads and other organizations.[12] Exchange programs can also help to bridge the gap between development education agencies and agencies supporting overseas projects. Yet any such program must also clearly benefit the host organization or country, or at the very least not place undue burdens on Third World partners. One idea would be an exchange of staff members between Canadian and Third World (or other donor country) NGOs; to date, however, only a few tentative steps have been taken, such as AQOCI's internships with the United Nations Non-Governmental Liaison Service (NGLS) offices in Geneva and New York.

It is ironic that while NGOs are more convinced than ever of the need to involve beneficiaries in the planning and implementation of overseas projects, many have become less open to involving Canadians in their own work. Yet most agencies believe that development implies changes at

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[12] Universalia Management Systems Ltd., "An Evaluation of Canadian Crossroads International: Une Évaluation de Carrefour Canadien International," Montreal, 1983, p. 150.

home as well as 'out there'. The constant upswelling of new agencies and schemes to provide avenues to involve Canadians – such as the growth of village twinning movements – attests to both the desire for involvement and the inadequate outlets for it provided by established NGOs.

The Alms Trade: Participation by Giving

Many Canadians participate in NGO activities primarily as donors – whether to church-related appeals, through a union or professional association, or by responding to fundraising messages. Each year hundreds of thousands of Canadians give to NGOs: according to the analysis in Chapter 2, total funds raised in 1984-85 from non-governmental sources were in the order of $280 million, or more than 10 dollars for each Canadian citizen.

Who Gives to NGOs?

Since the 1960s, the number of registered charities in Canada has increased dramatically, and currently totals more than 40,000. Yet the value of charitable donations has not kept pace with this growth, with the result that an ever larger voluntary sector is competing for a charity 'pie' which is at best growing slowly.[13]

How have development agencies fared in this competition for funds? By all indications, quite well. Between 1975 and 1984, for example, revenue from non-governmental sources for a sample of 51 development agencies grew by some 17 percent annually in current dollar terms, or almost 8 percent annually in real terms (see Table 5.2). While this is slower than the growth of government funding of NGOs, the increase is still considerable. Although development agencies appear less popular choices for

[13] Donations to charities by individual Canadians have increased in recent years: taxation statistics indicate that the total amount of charitable donations claimed for tax deduction rose from $885 million in 1979 to $1.7 billion in 1984. Over the longer term, however, the trend is less reassuring. A study by J.F. Deeg found that between 1961 and 1979, the percentage of all taxpayers claiming donations in excess of the standard $100 deduction fell from 25.9 percent to 9.2 percent. As a result, even though the average value of donations by this group increased both in real dollars and as a percentage of total income, per capita donations for Canadians as a whole have fallen as a percentage of disposable income. See J. F. Deeg, *How and What Canadians Contribute to Charity* (Toronto: Canadian Centre for Philanthropy, 1982), p. 5.

Table 5.2

Growth of Revenue of a Sample of NGOs, by Source of Funds
($ thousands)

	1975	1984	Average Annual Rate of Growth (%)
Current Dollars			
Government Sources	16,003	96,357	22.1
Private Sources	24,123	98,865	17.0
TOTAL	**40,127**	**195,221**	**19.2**
Constant (1981) Dollars[a]			
Government Sources	27,356	19,127	17.5
Private Sources	41,236	18,838	7.8
TOTAL	**68,593**	**125,625**	**9.8**

[a] Converted using Consumer Price Index (all items), as published in Department of Finance Canada, *Economic Review*, April 1985, p. 119.

Source: Based on questionnaire data. Only 51 agencies provided complete information for 1975 and 1984.

donations than domestic charities,[14] they have been very successful in raising funds from individual donors.

Unfortunately, the generosity of individual Canadians has not been matched by the Canadian corporate sector. This is not to say that corporate support of development work is non-existent; out of 98 agencies providing information on sources of revenue in 1984, 45 (46 percent) indicated they received some funding from corporate or foundation sources; and in

[14] The 1984 Gallup poll mentioned earlier showed that development NGOs are not the most popular targets of donor generosity. While 77 percent of those surveyed reported having donated money to charity in the past year, only 4 percent of these mentioned having donated to "organizations aiding third world countries," as compared to 50 percent giving to "organizations seeking cures for diseases," 46 percent to "social service organizations," and 17 percent to "churches, synagogues, and other religious groups." Some of the organizations in the latter two categories also do development work (the churches, the Red Cross), so the 4 percent figure is probably underestimated. Canadian Gallup Poll Limited, *Financial Support for Non-Profit Organizations, 1984*. As well, this poll was taken before the 1984/85 wave of public interest in African famine relief, which obviously increased the popularity of development charities, at least in the short term. A February 1986 poll showed that 56 percent of respondents claimed to have made a donation to African relief programs during the previous year. See *Canadians and Africa: What Was Said. A Report for the Honourable David MacDonald, Canadian Emergency Coordinator/African Famine of a nation-wide survey by Decima Research Ltd.*, conducted in February 1986 (Hull: Canadian Emergency Coordinator/ African Famine, 1986), p. 28.

some isolated cases corporate support is substantial. In total, however, corporate donations represented only 1.7 percent of their total revenue, down from 3 percent in 1975.

For the most part, this reflects the overall low rates of corporate giving in Canada. Allen Arlett, of the Canadian Centre for Philanthropy, notes that "between 70 and 80 percent of charitable giving has always come from individuals . . . . Corporate donations only accounted for 15 to 20 percent and that is declining."[15] In 1983 only 6 percent of all Canadian businesses that made a profit gave to charities, compared to the 88 percent of Canadian families who made charitable donations in 1981.[16] Those who do make donations have increased the size of their contributions since the late 1970s, but, at a reported average 0.4 percent of pre-tax profits, corporate philanthropy lags behind levels recorded in the 1960s, and is far less than the 1.5 to 1.8 percent of profits donated by corporations in the United States. As one editorial noted, in the battle over the distribution of Canadian corporate profits, "the slice cut for charity was almost transparently thin."[17]

It is also generally agreed that development agencies face a tougher battle attracting corporate funds than do many domestic charities. A survey of 293 Canadian corporations that donated to charity found that only 82 firms (28 percent) made gifts to 'foreign aid' charities; of these, at least 11 made gifts in-kind only, not direct cash contributions.[18] The authors of the report argue that the low level of support reflects "a cardinal principle of corporate giving – giving where your employees are."[19] As the number of fundraising requests to corporations increases, there is a clear danger that development agencies may not promise enough pay-offs to attract corporate support. As one corporate spokesperson stated,

> Business is becoming more sophisticated . . . Before, they just wanted to be good corporate citizens. Now they're looking for some indication of a benefit from the money they give.[20]

As one indication of this change, some observers note "a growing tendency to combine charitable activity with marketing or promotional objectives,"[21] sponsoring fundraising campaigns which help to increase their own public profile. In fact, the 1984 survey may actually overstate

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[15] *The Toronto Star* (25 April 1986).

[16] Martin, *An Essential Grace*, p. 144.

[17] *The Globe and Mail*, 17 December 1986.

[18] Institute of Donations and Public Affairs Research, *Corporate Giving in Canada, 1984*, Montreal, 1985, p. 5.

[19] *Ibid.*, p. 5.

[20] *The Toronto Star*, 25 April 1986.

[21] *The Globe and Mail*, 17 December 1986.

the level of corporate giving to NGOs: many respondents indicate that their donations were an exceptional, isolated response to the African 'crisis', and thus reflect the overall surge in donations to NGOs springing from the recent African famine.

Nor do Canadian NGOs generally attract large amounts of money from charitable foundations. Foundations are less active in Canada than in the United States, where large philanthropic foundations (the Ford Foundation, the Carnegie Endowment and others) have thrived. While there are some 1,000 Canadian charitable foundations, they are mostly small, and often limit their activities to a particular community in Canada. Only a small percentage of them, moreover, are active in the field of international development. As a result, it is not surprising that questionnaire data show only 1 percent of total NGO revenue in 1984 coming from foundation sources.

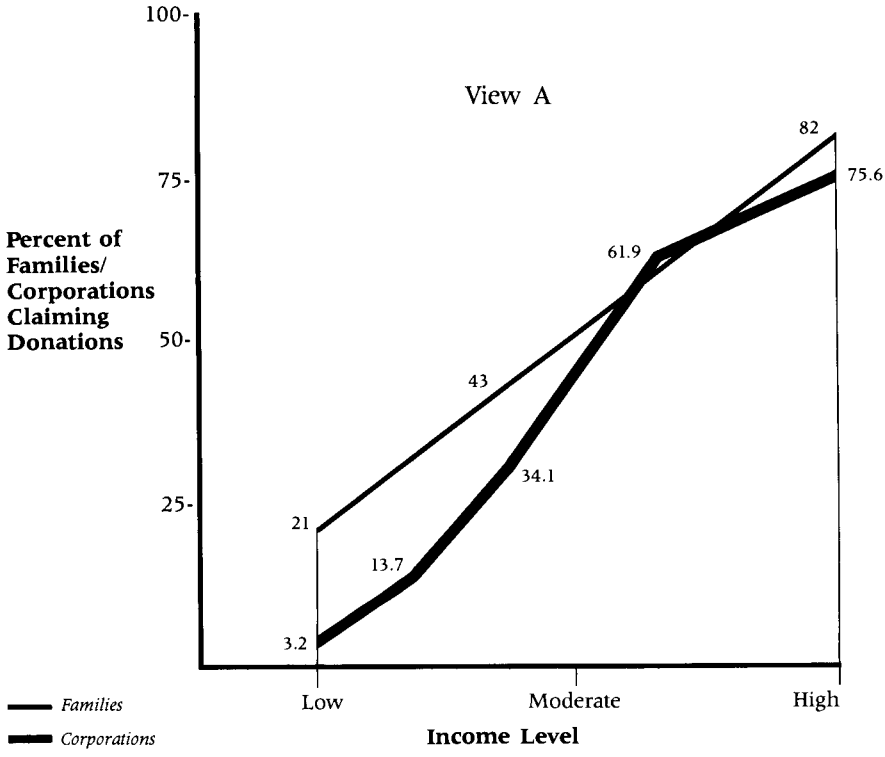
Who, then, supports the work of NGOs? The answer, quite clearly, is ordinary Canadians – and not necessarily those in higher income brackets. Both the incidence of charitable giving and the average value of donations increase with income, in much the same way that corporate giving increases with level of profits. But despite the fact that the capacity to give should rise faster than income (since higher income-earners spend less of their income on basic necessities than lower income groups), the *relative generosity* of individual and corporate donors (donations as a percentage of income or profits) actually decreases as income rises (see Figure 5.1). The resulting 'generosity gap' between rich and poor donors may actually be widening over time, at least for individual donors: between 1970 and 1979, percentage of income donated increased for lower income groups, but remained stagnant at intermediate income levels, and actually declined for those earning in excess of $50,000.[22] While some fundraising strategies are specifically geared toward higher-income Canadians (e.g. special events such as benefit dinners, or concerts), or increasing the value of individual contributions (such as by pre-authorized monthly deductions from bank accounts), middle- and upper-income Canadians may not be bearing their share of voluntary sector expenditures.

The other group not donating to NGOs is youth. The 1984 Gallup poll indicated that only 58 percent of those in the 18-24 year-old range had donated to charity, compared to over 80 percent for all other age groups. A lower level of giving is to be expected, since a high proportion of this group is still in school or unemployed. Yet it is clear that potential donations by youth are not being tapped by traditional fundraising strategies. The 1986 Decima poll notes that 45 percent of respondents in the 16-24 year-old range who made donations to African famine relief did so

[22] Deeg, *How and What Canadians Contribute to Charity*, p. 16.

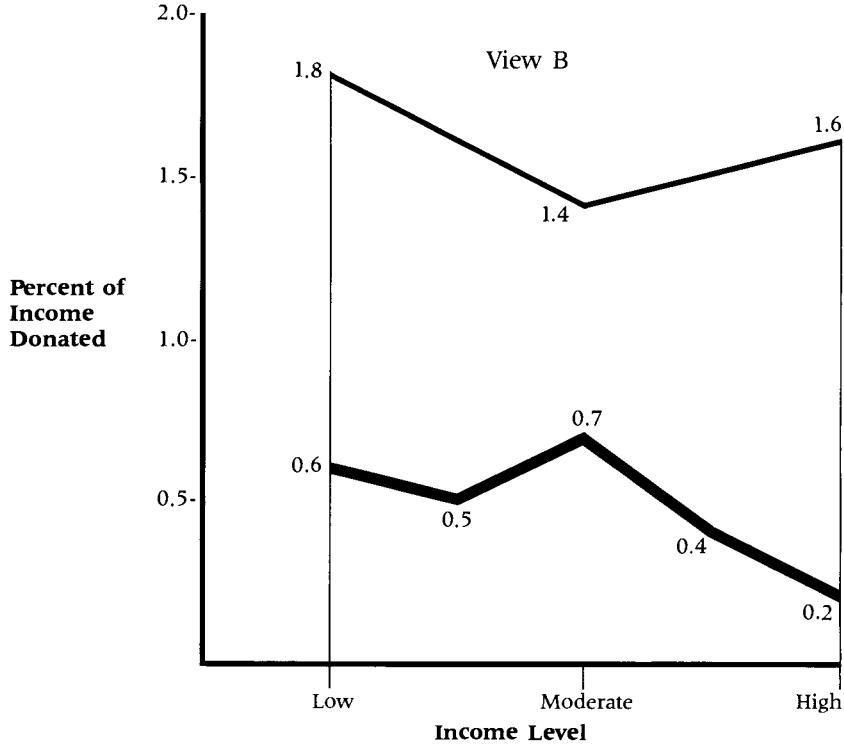
Figure 5.1

Two Views on Income and Charitable Donations



Source: Martin, pp. 232, 148.

through 'Live Aid' and other entertainment-related appeals, (as opposed to only 21 percent of all age groups.) Obviously, if NGOs are to capture the attention and dollars of young Canadians, they must design innovative approaches which reflect the interests of this group. But while some agencies, such as Club 2/3 and the YM/YWCA stress youth as an audience, most consistently neglect this important constituency. The current favorite fundraising technique, direct mail, is perhaps the least likely of all approaches to reach young Canadians, in stark contrast to earlier approaches such as the Miles for Millions walks of the 1960s and early 1970s.



Source: Based on figures in Samuel A. Martin, *An Essential Grace: Funding Canada's Health Care, Education, Welfare, Religion and Culture* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1985), pp. 148, 232. Family data, based on a 1981 Statistics Canada survey, show donations in excess of $100 for three income classes ($7,000–10,000; $15,000–25,000; and over $60,000). Corporation data, based on Revenue Canada returns, show all charitable donations by Canadian corporations, broken down into five income categories (up to $50,000; $50,000–100,000; $100,000–1,000,000; $1,000,000–30,000,000; and over 30,000,000).

Fundraising as Education

The commodity we are offering the public, in exchange for its donations, is to feel better about its own affluence when others have so little. We sell the public relief from guilt, they pay us with money for relief from famine.

In the long run, fundraising is not just about money. It may be the main conduit for public education. It may be the first step for Canadians in learning that they can do something about massive global problems, acting as part of a larger community.

These two quotations, both from fundraising consultants to major Canadian NGOs, reflect the diversity of opinion over the purposes of fundraising. At times, fundraising appears to be little more than the marketing end of the development 'business' – an emotional appeal for public generosity. Yet most NGOs also argue that fundraising is, or at least can be, more than a cynical attempt to attract individual donations: educated, responsible world citizens are a far greater resource for world development than dollars alone can ever be. Unfortunately, the marrying of the objectives of education and fundraising is fraught with difficulties.

In a sense, of course, all fundraising messages have an impact upon public opinion: Jorgen Lissner, in a study of fundraising and educational activities of European NGOs, notes that "as soon as a voluntary agency enters the field of public communication – as it does in any fundraising appeal – it adopts an educational role vis-a-vis its constituency."[23] What is at issue, is the quality of education being offered. The dynamics of fundraising, at least as practiced to date, can work against effective education, forcing a simplification and selectiveness upon issues of international development. Particularly in emergency appeals, agencies portray themselves as the solution to a given problem, at least in some small corner of the globe. In turn, the problems themselves are cast as something which aid can cure – through food, water, medicine, education or whatever – ignoring the larger political and economic forces which constrain development options. The necessarily long-term process of development is reduced, to use the words of Bernard Kouchner, founder of the French agency Médecins sans Frontières, to "un choc élémentaire, une réaction linéaire: on envoie l'ambulance et on oublie."[24]

Even in non-emergency fundraising appeals many agencies shy away from touching on controversial issues. In part, of course, this reflects NGOs' different understandings of the development process, and the causes of underdevelopment. Yet it also reflects a fear that 'political' stances on issues – for example, the linkages between militarism and underdevelopment – will only serve to alienate sections of the agency's donor constituency, leaving it less able to pursue its tasks. And at a much broader level, it stems from a conviction that "people give money to people, not to concepts"[25] – that giving is motivated essentially by compassion, not by feelings of solidarity and empathy. Even though there has never been conclusive proof that fundraising and development education are mutually exclusive, most NGOs are reluctant to stray far from the tried and true techniques of charity fundraising.

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23 Lissner, *The Politics of Altruism*, pp. 147-48.

24 Bernard Kouchner, *Charite Business* (Paris: Le Pré aux Clercs, 1986), pp. 166-167.

25 Quoted in Ben Whitaker, *A Bridge of People: A Personal View of Oxfam's First Forty Years* (London: Heinemann, 1983), p. 41.

What is more, recent trends in NGO fundraising may actually work against effective public education. In the first place, the search for new and more efficient fundraising tools has caused many agencies to discard activities based on the personal involvement of the donor. In the early 1970s, much agency fundraising depended on special events (rich/poor dinners, benefits, the Miles for Millions walks) which by their nature provided a context for education about development issues. By way of contrast, fundraising in the 1980s relies most heavily on direct mail appeals and, for some large agencies, mass media advertising. As a result, NGOs may well be losing the opportunity to inform donors and respond to their questions. Direct mail, for instance, restricts the amount of information that can be given and provides it in a uniform, one-way flow, rather than stimulating the flexible give-and-take which most educators agree is the basis of sound pedagogy.

Ironically, in the long run, this trend to 'efficiency' may make for less effective fundraising. In the 1984 Gallup poll quoted earlier, 84 percent of respondents approved of personal appeals for funds, compared to only 60 percent for direct mail and 24 percent for telephone solicitation.[26] As Chapter 6 will point out, direct mail is also among the most expensive of all fundraising techniques, and increased postal rates and the abolition of second class mail will only increase its costs. While established agencies will still generate sufficient returns to cover such costs, smaller agencies may ultimately be forced out of the direct mail market.

Competition among NGOs for donations can also diminish the educational content of appeals. As competition becomes more intense, agencies opt for 'sexy' appeals, with the emphasis on eye-catching graphics and messages rather than public education. To take just one example, a recent NGO direct mail appeal, perhaps hoping to capitalize on public concern for the African famine, spoke of a 'book famine' purportedly threatening Africa. Nor is this an isolated example: images of Africa have dominated NGO advertising since the fall of 1984, even for non-relief appeals. Not only does this give a distorted picture of the work of NGOs, but it further reinforces Canadians' perceptions of Africans as helpless and dependent.

On the other hand, this competition for funds could have a positive result, forcing some agencies toward a fundraising strategy based upon greater educational content. As any marketing executive knows, one of the most powerful marketing strategies is 'product differentiation', particularly for new entrants to a market facing tough competition from products with high name recognition. The analogy cannot be pushed too far, but it contains a lesson for the NGO community. Smaller NGOs find it difficult to compete with established fundraisers such as Foster Parents Plan or CARE Canada, which have the advantage of well-developed (and closely

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[26] Canadian Gallup Poll Limited, *Financial Support for Non-Profit Organizations, 1984*, p. 71.

guarded) mailing lists, and a well-known name; for some, the solution may be a move toward constituency education as a long-term fundraising strategy, attempting to increase people's understanding of international development, rather than simply tapping their compassion.

Some agencies, such as Inter Pares, Development and Peace, OXFAM-Canada or Tools for Peace, have already tried to integrate educational materials into their donor newsletters, profiling not only what the agency is doing but how this fits into the development process in a given region or community. The results are inconclusive as yet although some donors are clearly put off by references to militarization in the Caribbean or human rights abuses in Latin America. Such a strategy, if successful, will call into question the notion that fundraising and education are irreconcilable. But old notions die hard, and in the absence of pressure from their donor constituencies, NGOs may be unwilling to make the necessary changes.

In the end, however, demands by local indigenous NGO partners and Third World governments for a more accurate depiction of developing countries may force a change in Canadian agencies' advertising. At the same time, the need to sustain donor support in the face of the increasing complexity of the development process may demand that fundraising messages be based on respect rather than manipulation, and education rather than sensationalism. Nor, in an era of global communications, can agencies continue to pursue one image of development in their overseas programs, and present another, quite different image, to their supporters at home. To quote Bernard Kouchner once again:

> Is it necessary for their survival, that organizations working in the Third World resort to blatant manipulation of feelings? Yes, to raise money in the short term. But not if they want this support to last. On the contrary, it leaves the public with a false notion of both solidarity and development.[27]

A recent advertisement by a Quebec-based agency drew a quick riposte from Africans living in Quebec. In the Montreal daily *La Presse*, they complained of the distorting effects of emotional fundraising appeals:

> les pays touchés ont toujours su apprécier la solidarité internationale, mais ils se refusent à l'exploitation commerciale de la misère, qui est humiliante et contribue à renforcer les préjugés racistes.[28]

The African Crisis: Profile of a Fundraising Drive

The African crisis, more than any single event before or since, illustrates the tremendous fundraising potential of the NGO community. In Novem-

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[27] Kouchner, *Charite Business*, p. 167 (author's translation).

[28] *La Presse*, 25 May 1987.

ber 1984, following on the heels of the now-famous BBC broadcast of 23 October, the Canadian government announced the creation of a $65 million Special Fund for Africa, $15 million of which was set aside to match donations from individual Canadians. But donations to NGOs soon outstripped this amount, and the government eventually added another $15 million in matching funds for relief (announced in February 1985) and $18 million in matching funds for NGO recovery projects (announced in April of that year). By the end of 1985, as the crisis began to fade from the nation's TV screens, the government had channelled some $53 million to NGOs via Africa Emergency Aid (AEA), an inter-agency coordinating body established to distribute the funds. Perhaps even more strikingly, NGOs themselves had raised over $60 million for African relief and recovery, above and beyond their normal fundraising appeals.

As David MacDonald, Canadian Emergency Coordinator for the African Famine, noted,

> The Canadian community of voluntary organizations – large and small, and from all parts of the country – played an absolutely vital role in organizing and mobilizing emergency support for Africa . . . . These groups have built and maintained a pipeline of assistance which begins with the contributions of ordinary Canadians and ends, thousand of miles away, with the provision of help to the African people.[29]

Yet an examination of this same event also highlights some of the weaknesses of NGOs.

In the first place, it is clear that the NGOs alone could not have mobilized public support on the scale witnessed in 1984-85. While some agencies had been attempting to sensitize the public and policy makers to the deteriorating conditions in Africa for several months – and in some isolated cases had launched special donor appeals – it was the media, and particularly television coverage, which captured mass interest. John Watson, then operations director of WUSC, noted in a 1985 paper that "the extent to which the media managed to catalyze public opinion and, therefore, to facilitate an outpouring of donations, was radically underestimated" by all parties.[30] This is not to suggest that NGOs do not share some of the credit for eliciting such generosity from Canadians; but their role, for the most part, was in channelling and encouraging public

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[29] Canada, Canadian Emergency Coordinator/African Famine, *No More Famine: A Decade for Africa*, Report by the Honourable David MacDonald, Canadian Emergency Coordinator/ African Famine for the period ending 31 March 1986, p. 14.

[30] A. John Watson, "The Elephants and the Mouse: An NGO Perspective on the Influence of Media Coverage on Aid Projects," September 1985, p. 14 (mimeographed).

support, rather than in mobilizing it. Even in their role as conduits for individual donations, the capacity of agencies to respond was at times outstripped by the tide of public concern.

Many of the most innovative fundraising approaches were designed and operated outside the traditional NGO community – the Northern Lights entertainers' appeal for example, or the United Steelworkers' voluntary payroll deductions, or the spontaneous response of Inuit communities in northern Canada. All these campaigns succeeded in reaching audiences which had eluded mainstream NGOs – youth, labour, isolated communities. Yet they were amenable to the right kind of approach – a specific message tailored to the audience, rather than the homogenized appeals of mass-marketing.

Second, the African famine illustrated how quickly even the minimal educational content of NGO fundraising activities can be overpowered by the desire to maximize income. There are exceptions, of course, but NGOs have, on the whole, moved away from a strategy based on arousing pity, toward one which attempts to inform Canadians of the potential for development, and the ways in which they can help this process. Over the past decade, there has been a gradual shift away from images of poverty and helplessness, toward more positive, hopeful images of the Third World and its people. During the African famine, the pressure to raise funds led to a resurgence of 'starving baby' imagery. In autumn 1985 one national NGO, whose advertisements had increasingly emphasized the need for potable water, education and basic health care, rather than emergency relief, ran a two-thirds page ad in a national magazine. In the ad, a child clutches its mother's emaciated breast; across the picture is written a single word – "Mama . . . ." While the text below speaks of 'long-term solutions' and 'helping people stand on their own two feet', the image is one of despair and dependence. An advertisement for another agency featured a cartoon of a white chef staring in desperation at an endless line of black children with bowls waiting to be filled: again, the text emphasized the need for 'self-development', but the graphic image conveyed a very different message.

Such fundraising messages were particularly damaging in the context of the African famine, since they compounded the already oversimplified picture of Africa provided by media coverage which bordered on sensationalism. A review of U.S. and Canadian newspaper and magazine coverage of Ethiopia between January 1984 and June 1986 found that of 572 articles mentioning Ethiopia, only 44 (8 percent) gave any in-depth

analysis of Ethiopian history, or of the current political and/or military situation of the region.[31] To quote one observer, the

> humanitarian emphasis reinforced the stereotyped image of Third World victims dependent on the charity of the North . . . public response to Ethiopia, induced only after the films of mass starvation, was based on virtually complete ignorance of the complexities of the region or indeed of Africa as a whole.[32]

Finally, the experience with fundraising around the African famine illustrated the Canadian agencies' inability to sustain massive donor interest and support once the sense of emergency began to fade. As Figure 5.2 shows, donor support for African famine relief sharply increased in late 1984 and early 1985, but by the summer of 1985 had rapidly begun to decline. Many agencies now suggest that total fundraising income for 1985-86 dropped considerably in comparison to 1984-85. In Saskatchewan, for example, fundraising by SCIC member agencies dropped by 3 percent in current dollars in 1985-86, the first decrease in the 12 years SCIC has collected such data.

This drop in donor generosity is probably not surprising. In part it represents the normal pattern of response to an emergency situation. By the end of 1985, as positive reports of harvests in Africa become more common, and as media coverage of Ethiopia faded, the public became less and less convinced of the urgency for further giving.[33] But it also demonstrates the NGOs' failure to convince the public that the task of long-term development is just as vital as that of short-term relief, and equally deserving of support. While NGOs themselves are well aware of the long-term nature of development needs, the logic of 'mass-marketing' fundraising leads them to emphasize short-term responses rather than building long-term support for development. If they cannot change their strategy the entire development community may suffer, as 'donor fatigue' depresses the level of public support for aid programs in general.

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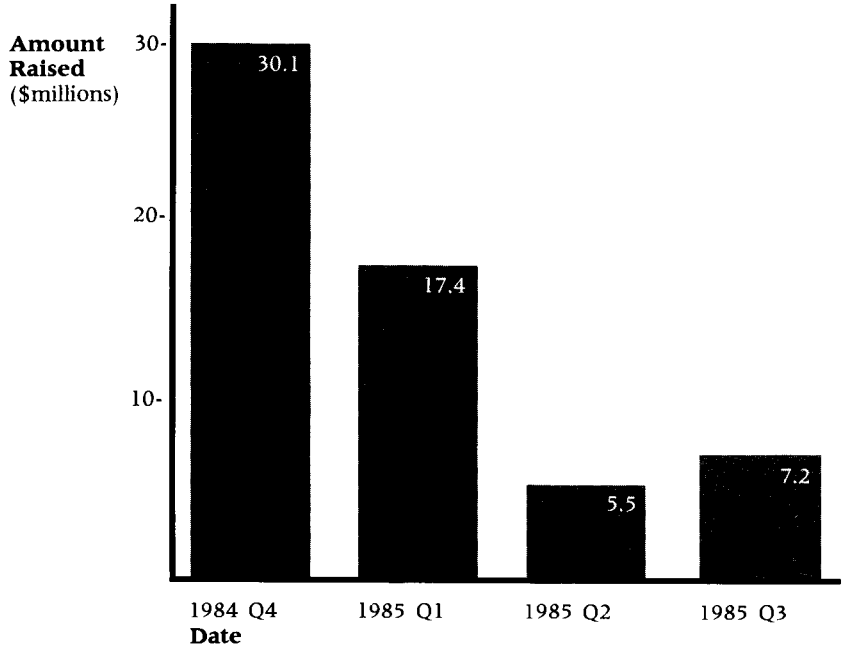
[31] Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies, "North American Perceptions of Conflict in the Horn of Africa," p. 3.

[32] Ken Epps, "Canadian Development Education Response to the African Crisis," Discussion Paper for the JUNIC/NGO Development Education Project on Africa, no date, pp. 3-5 (draft).

[33] This trend was not limited to Canada, but also occurred in other donor countries. See, for example, Linda Feldmann, "Crisis persists as foreign aid falls: UN wages war on donor apathy," *The Christian Science Monitor*, 24-30 November 1986, p. 9. Declining donor interest is worsened by reports of misuse of aid funds by voluntary agencies and government officials; see, for example, Rony Brauman, "Famine Aid in Ethiopia: We Have Been Duped," *Reader's Digest* (November 1986), pp. 68-75.

Figure 5.2

Funds Raised for African Famine Relief by 46 NGOs



Note: Q = Quarter.

Source: Based on telephone surveys carried out by Africa Emergency Aid. All data are unofficial and approximate. Totals refer to funds collected specifically for famine relief, above and beyond normal fundraising revenue, since October 1984. The total for 1984-Q4 is slightly exaggerated, since it includes funds collected in the first few days of January 1985, and, in a few cases, funds raised specifically for African famine relief before October 1984.

Building Participation: Education for Development

As was pointed out in Chapter 1, the roots of development education in Canada lie in the adult education theories of Freire, Illich and others, and in the creative spark provided by the first wave of returned CUSO volunteers in the mid-to-late 1960s. These combined to create not just a network of community-based education activities, but also a pedagogical orientation which emphasizes the necessity of rooting education in people's own experiences, and the linkage between education and action. Since that time, development education has expanded to encompass a multiplicity of learner centre activities, national publicity campaigns, school programs, and so on. Within these, there remains a core of beliefs that stresses the *process* of education as well as the product, and

which sees education not as the transmission of information, but rather as providing a context within which individuals can come to understand their own situation, and act on the basis of that understanding.

In that sense then, development education *is* participation, action based on understanding: in interviews, development education workers pointed out again and again that mobilizing Canadians to support change is central to their notion of development education. For example, one learner centre describes its objective as "to raise public awareness and foster action on international development and social justice issues"; a church-based national development education program speaks of a "focused education program aimed at specific actions"; and a national NGO with both overseas and development education activities stresses the need for "understanding leading to action." The specific type of action varies, depending both on the agency and the individual involved. But whether the action is signing a petition, supporting overseas work, or dealing with poverty in Canada, participation is at the heart of the objectives of development education.

The Canadian NGO community is widely regarded as being in the forefront of 'dev. ed.' work. Foreign visitors (particularly from the United States, where development education has a much shorter history) frequently remark on Canada's maturity in this sphere: not only the range and quality of development education work done in Canada (due at least in part to ongoing government support), but also the solid network of development education groups established, both in larger centres and in smaller communities and rural areas.[34] In a comparative report on development education in Europe and Canada, prepared in 1982 for the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, Pierre Pradervand mentions several ways in which Canadian agencies have played a pioneering role, ranging from the concept of 'learner centres', to the work of the Common Heritage Programme in curriculum development, to exchanges between Canadian and Caribbean farmers.[35]

Despite this enviable reputation, Canadian NGOs face recurrent doubts about the effectiveness of their development education. Financial dependence on government, coupled with frequent disparaging references to "talking only to the converted," delays and uncertainties in funding, and lack of clarity concerning CIDA's own priorities for its Public Participation

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[34] Angus Archer, a transplanted Canadian now heading the UN Non-Governmental Liaison Service in New York, has remarked on U.S. agencies' admiration for the "effective force of Canadian dev. ed. initiatives." See Angus Archer, "Development Education: Some International Perspectives," *Canadian and International Education* 12:3 (Special Issue 1983), p. 62.

[35] Pierre Pradervand, *Development Education: The 20th Century Survival and Fulfillment Skill* (Bern: Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, January 1982).

Program, combine to create a siege mentality which can inhibit creativity and self-criticism. Low salaries discourage professional development, while lack of systematic monitoring of public opinion reduces proof of impact to reliance on subjective and anecdotal evidence. Some ways of estimating impact do exist: for example, one partial indicator is the extent to which development education groups are able to reach their intended audience, as measured by demand for the services they provide. DEC in Toronto claims to reach some 600,000 people, from coast to coast, through its book and film distribution services. On a smaller scale, the Global Community Centre (GCC) in Kitchener, Waterloo, reports some 20,000 users, or almost 10 percent of the total population it serves; even assuming a large number of multiple users, the Centre still manages to reach a sizeable portion of its potential audience, with very limited resources.[36] Even greater numbers are reached through indirect 'ripple' effects. Ten Days for World Development, a national education program run jointly by five 'mainstream' churches, reaches an estimated 40,000 people directly each year via local activities, but may reach more than 100,000 indirectly, through media coverage and the informal spread of information.

Nor are NGO programs targeted exclusively at the converted; many agencies have made serious attempts to cultivate new, harder-to-reach audiences. Many learner centres in predominately rural areas (especially on the Prairies) have devised special programs for the farm population: The Marquis Project, in Brandon, for example, produces weekly articles for rural newspapers, while the South Saskatchewan Committee for World Development (SSCWD) in Regina has a rural animator on staff to serve communities outside Regina. Other programs geared to rural people include the Rural Inter-Church Development Education Program (RICDEP) in Saskatchewan, the Centre de Solidarité Internationale d'Alma in Quebec, and the Northern Development Education Project, based in Dawson Creek, B.C., which serves isolated communities in Northern B.C. and Alberta, and parts of the Yukon. In larger centres, agencies have been slower to move away from the traditional NGO bases of churches and community groups, but some are working to develop a wider constituency. The Arusha Centre in Calgary, for example, targeted a recent educational program on the Middle East to members of the petroleum industry, while the St. John's (Newfoundland) Oxfam Commit-

[36] In the case of GCC, with a 1984 budget of some $144,000, a rough estimate of cost per user would thus be just over seven dollars. PPP has encouraged dev. ed. groups to collect such information as one indicator of their impact and efficiency. Yet the scale economies involved in educational activities mean that learner centres and other dev. ed. groups cannot hope to compete with, for example, the mainstream information media. NGOs should continue to collect such information, but also look to other "proxies" for impact, which reflect the nature of their work. One such indicator may be links to the community, as reflected in the composition of boards of directors, or the frequency of local media coverage.

tee has tried to involve health care professionals in special programs. In Saskatchewan, the CUSO-OXFAM Labour Project (COLP) has a long history of working with the labour movement.[37]

As with the overseas work done by NGOs, however, most indicators of success deal only with individual agencies or programs, telling us little about the cumulative national impact of the total development education community. The record of development education groups is not qualitatively different from that of agencies supporting overseas projects: both have proven their ability to design and carry out a variety of small-scale projects, both continue to face nagging doubts about their broader impact. But while individual overseas projects are generally judged on their own merits, development education, paradoxically (and probably unfairly), is expected to produce wholesale changes in the attitudes and behaviour of Canadians. In fact, however, dev. ed groups face a tougher battle in proving their effectiveness, even on a limited scale. Changes in attitudes and opinions are hard to measure, especially if there is no set of standards or baseline data against which to assess progress. This difficulty is at the heart of scepticism about development education impact. While many point to opinion polls as evidence that development education is successful in creating a favourable attitude to international development,[38] NGOs are only one influence on public opinion, and (judging from the response to the African famine) not the most important.

Uncertainty about impact is of course widespread among Canadian organizations working for social change, from environmental groups, to the women's movement, to the peace and disarmament network. Development education, despite its frequent characterization as a 'voice in the wilderness', is not completely *sui generis*, either in its goals or its periodic self-doubts. Yet the effectiveness of these other groups in changing public attitudes (if not always policy) has often seemed greater than that of the

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[37] See Christine Smillie, "Doing Development Education with Labour," *Canadian and International Education*, 12:3 (1983), pp. 149-152.

[38] In a 1985 poll on Canadian foreign policy, 40 percent of Canadians selected poverty and hunger as the most important issue facing the world, compared to 28 percent for the arms race, and 20 percent for economic problems. See Decima Research Ltd., *The Canadian Public and Foreign Policy Issues*, Toronto, August 1985, p. 5. Dev. ed. workers contrast such results with public opinion in the United States, where one crucial difference has been the lack of a substantial dev. ed. community. A recent U.S. poll, for example, found that only 54 percent of Americans were in favour of providing foreign aid at any level; by way of comparison, the 1985 Decima poll showed that 83 percent of Canadians feel Canada is spending the right amount or too little on foreign aid, and only 17 percent would decrease current levels of aid giving. See Christine E. Contee, *What Americans Think: Views on Development and U.S. – Third World Relations*. A Public Opinion Project of Inter-Action and the Overseas Development Council, New York and Washington, 1987, p. 23; Decima Research Ltd., *The Canadian Public and Foreign Policy Issues*, p. 59.

development community – partly because they provide more opportunities for direct public involvement but also because of some critical weaknesses of the development education community.

First among these is the lack of inter-agency coordination – more glaring perhaps in the development education sphere than in any other aspect of NGO work. Certainly, there are examples of agencies sharing information and (less frequently) working together: since 1973, the 'mainline' churches have jointly run the national Ten Days for World Development program, and CCIC, provincial councils and *ad hoc* groupings facilitate contact among groups at the regional and local level. But cooperation between local and national agencies is limited. In part this results from the differing priorities and resulting functional specialization of the two types of organizations involved in development work: development education groups are uniquely concerned with educational work, but for the larger agencies with overseas programs, the fundraising imperative often leads them to combine development education with agency promotion. However, there may also be an ideological division between the two groups of agencies. Often those working solely in development education highlight a different conception of social change than those concerned mainly with overseas programming.

Second, as Chapter 4 pointed out, the development education sector as a whole suffers from a precarious financial position, resulting in a lack of 'fit' between goals that are inherently long-term in nature, and chronic funding uncertainties. Financial insecurity, and, especially, vulnerability to changes in government policy, remain serious problems. Programs to involve schools, media or community groups require long-term planning, staff continuity, and a well-developed skills and resource base, none of which can be built if agencies are uncertain of their funding beyond the current year. Figures collected by Sterken, for example, show that for a sample of 13 learner centres, the average expenditure on resource acquisition was only 5.1 percent of total budget (compared to 65 percent for salaries); in only one case did resource acquisition receive more than 10 percent of total budget.[39] Similarly, many development education groups are only now beginning to computerize their operations, in part because until recently PPP would not fund equipment purchases. Responses to our questionnaire, for example, indicated that only 16 agencies (12.5 percent) use computers to access outside data bases.

Third, and related to the above point, the information and analytical base of development education groups is often weak. The rift between development education and overseas development, both between and within agencies, deprives development education workers of ongoing first-hand

[39] Jack Sterken, "National Review of Learner Centres for the CIDA Public Participation Program" (Draft, 1986).

exposure to the Third World, and thus the opportunity to confront their analysis with the reality of people's daily struggle and changing needs. A lack of training opportunities compounds the problem. A 1985 study concluded that most training consists of 'learning by doing' or in-house workshops; perhaps most importantly, travel and education grants are available for paid staff in only 14 percent of agencies, and for volunteers in only 3 percent.[40] Clearly, some additional measures (e.g., study tours, staff exchanges) are needed if development education groups are to overcome the current information gap.

Some remedies are available to overcome some of the weaknesses discussed above. For example, local development education agencies could strengthen their finances by negotiating a fee-for-service arrangement with national NGOs, which already use the services of learner centres and other local groups for speaking tours and other national campaigns. Similarly, a national opinion poll on development issues, such as that carried out in 1986 by U.S. NGOs, could provide useful information for planning and evaluating development education programs. Agencies working at the local level have long emphasized the importance of linking the development education message to local concerns, but NGOs' knowledge of their audience on a national scale is quite limited.

But a more complete resolution of the problems facing the development education community will demand that NGOs and their supporters (governmental and private) come to terms with the changing nature of development education itself. Over the past decade, the subject matter of development education has broadened, moving beyond so-called 'Third World' issues to embrace a wide range of topics affecting Canada's own future as well as that of Southern nations: trade, human rights, racism and immigration, environmental protection and the impact of militarism. Development education has become, in the words of the Swiss educator Pierre Pradevand, the "twentieth century survival skill," what humankind needs to know and apply in order to survive into the next century. It is not just a body of knowledge or set of skills, but a way of thinking about the issues confronting us: the exercise of critical judgement and the making of intelligent choices based on clear values.

This goes a long way beyond CIDA's more limited mandate to promote public awareness and support for Canada's aid programs. Yet clearly the expanded mandate of development education also requires a stable base of financial support. Active public involvement is essential to responsible citizenship in a democratic society, and it is legitimate that government should support such involvement – particularly given the limited capacity of most development education agencies to raise their own funds. In the

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[40] Giovannini, *Report on the Training of Development Education Workers in Canada*, p. 23.

end, this means not simply a continuation of governmental support through PPP, but also multi-year program funding, so that development education agencies can overcome the uncertainties fostered by year-to-year grants.

At the same time, the 'new' conception of development education requires a change of attitude on the part of development education NGOs. If the development education message is no longer isolated from the concerns of other social groups, neither can development education workers act in isolation from such groups, or from the institutions which shape our attitudes. In an ironic twist to the statement oft-repeated by NGOs that "we are in business to work ourselves out of business," the success of development education will be measured by the extent to which its preoccupations are integrated into the everyday concerns of our major institutions – perhaps ultimately at the expense of specialized development education groups. As in NGOs' overseas programs, the ultimate test of development education agencies' success is the building of broad, sustainable impact; this in turn may demand that NGOs recognize the limits on their ability to 'do' development education, and instead emphasize a facilitative or catalytic role.

Already, there have been considerable moves in this direction. In interviews, several learner centres noted that one of the most tangible illustrations of their impact is the growth of other groups (e.g. Central American or South African solidarity groups) which now carry out some of the work formerly performed by the learner centre. A recent report to PPP echoes this conclusion regarding the 'catalytic' role of learner centres. The report, a review of the 29 PPP-funded learner centres, argues that, at least in the larger cities, learner centres have been able to shift away from direct community animation, toward a 'community coordination' role, providing support services to groups and individuals working on various development education issues, or providing a development focus to non-international groups. As a result, the report concludes, several centres have "created a network of community ties that has significantly increased the multiplier factor and impact of centre activities."[41]

Attempts to expand development education's impact also lead to new and difficult choices for NGOs. Nowhere is this clearer than in the continuing debate over work within the schools. For many years, the formal education system was dismissed by NGOs: restrictive curricula, lack of access, and the difficulty of transplanting development education from its community-based, adult education roots all conspired to insulate NGOs from the schools. In the past decade, however, this has changed. Groups ranging from the Canadian Red Cross Society to Queen's University International Centre and Coopération Nord-Sud in Montreal have devel-

[41] Sterken, "National Review of Learner Centres," 1986.

oped teaching materials, promoted curriculum changes to embrace global education, and conducted workshops for teachers. CIDA has encouraged this trend with increased funding: approximately 36 percent of PPP's budget is now devoted to NGO work in schools.

Many development education workers continue to doubt that development education can be practiced in the schools without a loss of clarity and context. Pat Mooney, for example, has argued forcefully for the need to "drop the schools. They are a monstrosity we cannot substantially influence. They are basically conservative – their job is to socialize kids into accepting the world as it is."[42] Others worry that the availability of PPP funding for school programs risks reducing funding for other types of development education work. In the end, however, development education groups cannot ignore the schools. The relevance of the school system to development education is not simply that schools play a key role in shaping the attitudes of young people, nor that they provide a captive audience for information about the Third World, but rather that they potentially multiply many times over the impact that development education can have. Clearly, there must be a balance between school programs and community-based education, both within and among agencies, and CIDA's funding policies must continue to recognize this. But school programs will remain a crucial part of the development education agenda – and those NGOs choosing to work there must develop skills in areas such as curriculum development, coordinate their efforts to avoid duplication, and, as much as possible, ensure that other actors (school boards and trustees, teachers' federations) integrate development education concerns into their own work.

Many of the same issues are raised in terms of NGOs' relations with other institutions, such as the news media. On the one hand, the Canadian media's generally poor coverage of international events, its tendency to present news in 'bits' without adequate context, and the one-way information flow involved, all limit the relevance of the media to development education as practiced to date. As a result, NGOs' relations with the media have been at arm's length and *ad hoc*: although some development education groups have influenced small, community-based newspapers, their impact on national print or broadcast media has been minimal. Yet there may be scope for increased collaboration, with the media serving both as a channel for development education groups' messages, and, at least in some cases, as a voice for global education in its own right. To achieve the former, NGOs need to foster better contact with journalists, and build up their own credibility so that the media will turn to them for information and comment. The latter is necessarily more difficult, but even here some

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[42] Pat Mooney, "Seeing Global Issues Through Local Eyes," *Canadian and International Education*, 12:3 (1983), p. 82.

initial steps are being taken; to take one example, PAC has provided funding for a full-time Canadian journalist to be stationed in Harare, Zimbabwe, to provide in-depth coverage of African development issues. At best, of course, this will be a small part of the overall development education effort and it is unrealistic to assume that the small development education community can on its own alter the media's coverage of development issues. But, as with the schools, building links to the media may be an area where NGOs, by refusing to 'go it alone', can significantly increase their impact.

Conclusion

A large number of Canadians *are* involved in the work of NGOs; in fact NGOs continue to represent one of the few practical channels for Canadians to become directly involved in international development. But trends over the past two decades have made it more difficult for NGOs to offer interesting and challenging forms of involvement to ordinary Canadians. The steady improvement of Southern countries' own human resources is gradually reducing the need for the type of direct service overseas formally provided by CUSO and other volunteer-sending agencies. At the same time, the struggle to do better – or in some cases simply to do more – has led NGOs to emphasize professional staff and rule-based procedures (in the process often 'squeezing out' volunteer staff within Canada), and to adopt fundraising strategies based on mass-marketing techniques rather than direct personal contact.

The challenge is not to return to old methods of involving Canadians, but to look for new, innovative approaches which foster, rather than frustrate, the gradual transfer of responsibility to the people and organizations of the South and which advance, rather than impede, overall program impact and efficiency. In the future this may mean not so much involving Canadians *within* NGOs, but rather involving Canadians *through* NGOs – by ensuring that fundraising appeals have a strong educational component, by redoubling efforts to educate Canadians in favour of a more just relationship between North and South, and, increasingly, by building more direct links between Canadians and the people of the South.

6 Efficiency: What Price Impact?

Those who work in our non-governmental organizations have proven many times that they know how to make a dollar stretch an amazing distance
– Margaret Catley-Carlson

Voluntary development agencies have always been concerned with controlling their expenses – partly because they have traditionally been forced to work with limited funds, and partly because they view money raised from the public as a kind of sacred trust, to be administered as scrupulously as possible. Changes in recent years have increased the pressure on NGOs to operate efficiently. In particular, expanded governmental support has been based in large measure on an assumption that certain NGO characteristics (low salary scales, modest administrative costs, flexible, small-scale programs) give them cost advantages over bilateral and multilateral aid channels. Vittorio Masoni of the World Bank, for example, argues that donors increasingly turn to NGOs out of 'pragmatic considerations', seeing them as "more efficient conduits for development inputs than the often-discredited official agencies."[1] In return, official aid agencies are beginning to demand in-depth studies to test NGOs' presumed efficiency.[2]

At its simplest, efficiency refers to the rate at which inputs (for example, dollars) are converted into outputs (development impact). As such, efficiency depends not on minimizing costs, but on maximizing impact *with a given level of resources*. Too often, however, NGOs have seen efficiency as simply a matter of keeping costs low. The few attempts to carry out more in-depth studies of the costs *and* benefits of NGO programs have met with only mixed success – at least in part because the standards and techniques used to assess large, bilateral aid projects are not always feasible or relevant for NGO work.

In light of this, this chapter serves a dual purpose. The first section reviews some of the traditional measures of NGO efficiency, and the shortcomings of such measures. In the subsequent sections, data from research for this study are used to highlight four alternate indicators of NGOs' efficiency: the ability of NGOs to mobilize non-governmental resources; the sustainability of NGO activities over time; the degree of replication of innovative NGO programs; and the extent of cooperation among NGOs. In each of these areas, the emphasis is on the need for NGOs (and those who

[1] Vittorio Masoni, "Non-governmental organizations and development," *Finance and Development* 22:3 (September 1985), p. 38.

[2] See USAID, *Development Effectiveness of Private Voluntary Organizations*, February 1986.

observe their work) to take a broader view of issues of cost-effectiveness and efficiency: in the long run, NGOs' efficiency will be ensured not by strictly controlling costs, but rather by investing in activities which promise a broader, more sustained impact.

Traditional Measures of Efficiency

Administrative Costs

There are a number of possible cost advantages of NGOs vis-a-vis official donors: their exception from aid-tying regulations, which allows them to search out lowest-cost suppliers; their ability to negotiate preferential shipping rates owing to their charitable status; or their generally lower salary scales. Most often, however, attention is focused on NGOs' administative overheads.

Despite the rare and usually well-publicized abuses[3], on the whole NGOs' in-Canada operating costs appear to be within acceptable limits. A survey of 1984-85 financial statements for 44 Canadian NGOs revealed that on average these agencies spent about 13 percent of their expenditures[4] on administration and fundraising – although a true assessment is difficult, due to different definitions of administrative expenses, and divergent accounting practices. The simpler approval procedures of NGOs should also keep their costs lower than those of large bureaucracies. 'Small is beautiful' reasoning, however, cannot be pushed too far: in some areas (e.g., project design and evaluation) there may exist considerable economies of scale, so that larger agencies and projects (whether governmental or non-governmental) will have a cost advantage over smaller ones.[5]

This type of analysis, however, only deals with one-half of the efficiency equation: low costs on their own are not a guarantee of cost-effectiveness. Low administrative costs depend as much on an agency's style of operation as upon its ability to use resources efficiently; simple transfers of funds to overseas partners obviously require less administration than the design of development projects, which in turn are less administration intensive than the provision of technical assistance through cooperant placements. While a certain limit on administration expenses is essential to guard against abuse, the relationship between costs and cost-

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[3] The most recent example was the exposure in 1985 of International Christian Aid, a U.S. based agency whose funds for African relief allegedly never reached the continent. See *The Toronto Star*, 7 April 1985.

[4] Calculations were deliberately based on expenditures rather than on revenue (as is often the case). During 1984/85, donations often outstripped agencies' ability to disburse, so that there was a large gap between revenue and expenditure.

[5] Gene Ellis, "Making PVOs Count More: A Proposal," in *Private Voluntary Organizations as Agents of Development*, Robert F. Gorman, ed. (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1984).

effectiveness is not a simple one, and up to a certain point may even be negative. Robert Chambers[6] notes that projects which most effectively reach the poor are relatively administration-intensive in comparison with other development efforts. Stringent constraints on administrative costs may reduce long-term cost-effectiveness, if they result in cut-backs in project monitoring, staff development, research or policy development.

Cost-Benefit Analysis

The few studies which look in detail at the costs and benefits of NGO programs are far from conclusive in their findings; they do indicate, however, that NGOs' claims to cost-effectiveness are open to some question. A 1979 study of 17 U.S. NGO projects in Kenya and Niger concluded that even with 'generous' assumptions regarding discount rates, time horizons and future costs, eight of the 17 projects had an implied benefit-to-cost ratio of less than one – that is, benefits generated were less than costs – despite the fact that all 17 projects had been selected as examples of successful projects.[7] A 1986 evaluation of five Canadian NGOs which ship medical equipment to Third World countries found that high transportation and administration costs, combined with the unsuitability of much equipment and inadequate attention to maintenance, resulted in poor cost/benefit ratios, despite the fact that the equipment had been donated. In fact, for certain types of sophisticated equipment, there was a net *negative* impact on recipients, regardless of cost considerations.[8]

Evidence from the field suggests that in other types of programs, however, Canadian agencies may have greater success. In Peru, for example, two separate water supply programs (one urban and one rural) were operating at a claimed 40 percent and 60 percent, respectively, of the cost of comparable Peruvian government programs. In Bangladesh, a road maintenance program emphasized preventive maintenance and relied on the labour of destitute women; its costs were estimated at somewhere between 15 and 30 percent of the cost of the 'normal' government practice of allowing roads to deteriorate and then rebuilding them every five years or so.

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[6] Robert Chambers, "Project Selection for Poverty-Focused Rural Development: Simple is Optimal," *World Development* 6:2 (February 1978), p. 210.

[7] Development Alternatives Inc., *The Development Impact of Private Voluntary Organizations: Kenya and Niger. Final Report,* Washington, D.C., 1979.

[8] Frederick Ian Gilchrist, "Health Help: Non-Governmental Organizations and the Canadian International Development Agency Cooperating in Medical Supply Operations for Health Development," June 1986, pp. 20-24 (draft).

Toward New Standards of Efficiency

Unfortunately, accurate cost/benefit analysis is complicated by the nature of NGO programs. In the first place, while measurement of inputs (costs) is relatively straightforward, measuring outputs (benefits) is more complicated, particularly when benefits are largely intangible or long-term in nature. This, combined with poor record-keeping by some agencies and the lack of reliable baseline studies, severely limits the sample of projects which can be assessed. A 1985 study of 32 projects co-financed by the European Communities, for example, found that in only one was there clear evidence available on which to judge project efficiency.[9]

Our own field surveys bore this out: while accurate information on costs and benefits was often available for these projects with a single, quantifiable output (e.g., water supply systems, health clinics), this is only a small percentage of total NGO activities. In addition, while cost/benefit ratios of individual projects may be helpful, it would be more informative to compare NGO performance to that of official donors or local government. Unfortunately, the nature of NGO work is often qualitatively different from that of these actors, so that comparable projects are difficult, if not impossible, to find.

More importantly, the small size of most NGO activities means that static measures of cost-effectiveness may provide few clues as to a project's ultimate success or failure. Traditional cost/benefit analyses pay little attention to the dynamic long-term effects of a development intervention. Yet it is precisely through such effects – replication of activities by other groups, for example – that small projects may have their greatest impact. This was the conclusion of a 1981 evaluation of 20 projects supported by British NGOs:

> Taking the 20 projects overall, efficiency, or the conversion of inputs into outputs, seemed to be moderately high, but often this did not itself seem to be a critical determinant of project success . . . If the project impact endured and/or the wider community benefitted from even modest replication, the efficiency of the original project was of little significance to the project return.[10]

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[9] Genevieve de Crombrugghe, Mick Howes and Mark Nieukierk, "An Evaluation of CEC Small Development Projects: Draft Report," Brussels, Collectif d'Échanges pour la Technologie Appropriée (COTA), November 1985, p. 11 (mimeographed).

[10] K. O. H. Osborne and G. A. Armstrong, *An Evaluation of the Joint Funding Scheme* (London: Overseas Development Administration, January 1982), pp. 20-21.

A similar conclusion was reached by a team evaluating projects financed by the European Communities, which concluded that "conventional tools of economic analysis are not well adapted to the needs of small projects."[11]

What then, are relevant standards of efficiency for NGOs? As noted above, our research pointed to four important considerations: the ability of NGOs to mobilize private resources; the long-term impact of their projects, as measured by the degree of sustainability and the extent of replication; and the effectiveness of cooperation among agencies.

Efficiency in Mobilizing Private Resources

Other things remaining equal, NGOs' ability to draw on non-governmental resources should allow them to achieve greater results per dollar of ODA funds than official aid agencies. Indeed, this is one of the explicit purposes of government funding of development agencies. CIDA's policy manual states that one purpose of the NGO program is

> on a cost-sharing basis, to stimulate and support Canadian groups as the focal point for non-governmental aid and, in doing so, to have a multiplier effect on Canada's total aid effort and a greater impact on the developing countries.[12]

There are two ways in which NGOs can have such an impact: by mobilizing Canadian resources, in support of development programs; and by encouraging beneficiaries to contribute to specific activities.

The Cost of Fundraising

As was pointed out in Chapter 5, NGOs successfully raise millions of dollars annually from individual Canadians; each dollar of official aid funds channelled through NGOs, statistics show, is accompanied by at least an equivalent contribution from private sources. While the ratio of private contributions to government grants has fallen since 1975, this is largely because of the rapid increase in government funding of NGO work, not a decline in public donations, which have more than kept pace with inflation. The volunteer work of thousands of Canadians further increases this multiplier effect of government grants to NGOs. On the other hand, fundraising is not a costless activity, and in some cases absorbs a large share of an NGO's time and energy. A review of financial statements for 26 Canadian NGOs found that on average their fundraising

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[11] de Crombrugghe *et al*, "An Evaluation of CEC Small Development Projects," p. 11.

[12] Quoted in CIDA, Evaluation Division, Policy Branch, *Evaluation Assessment of the NGO Program: Volume no. 1, Program Profile*, May 1983, p. 4.

costs in 1984-85 represented 15 percent of the amount raised from the public (i.e., excluding government contributions). In some cases, fundraising costs were as high as 40 percent of the total amount raised.

If anything, such figures understate the true cost of fundraising; NGO reporting in this area is woefully inadequate, with many agencies failing to include staff salaries as part of fundraising costs, or including some of their fundraising costs under 'information' or 'education' budgets. For the most part, however, high fundraising costs do not represent waste or unscrupulousness on the part of fundraising agencies, but rather the difficulty of penetrating the highly competitive charity 'business'. In direct mail appeals, for example, 'prospect' appeals (i.e., those sent to a large mailing list which has not previously donated) may produce a 2 or 3 percent response rate, based on a 500,000 letter mail-out. As the number of direct mail appeals increases (as it has recently in Canada), the response rate will decrease, as will the return on fundraising costs. One study notes that in the U.S., where perhaps 6 of 10 families receive some form of direct mailing, such appeals may only raise 25 cents for every dollar invested; in France, where only 3 of 10 families have been approached, a dollar spent on prospect mailings may raise two or more from the public. For subsequent mailings to 'reliable' donors only, returns increase dramatically.[13]

When agencies were asked how their fundraising techniques had changed over the past decade, the most frequent response was that they had begun, or increased the use of, direct mail campaigns. Only a small number indicated that they made use of new techniques (such as the use of credit cards, pre-authorized donations) designed to make donating easier for the donor and less costly for the agency. Those who have done so are almost always the large, established agencies. This, combined with the fact that established fundraising agencies have carved out a reliable market share based on name recognition and development of mailing lists, means that smaller agencies and new entrants will almost undoubtedly face higher fundraising costs.

Finally, it should be noted that the relationship between resource mobilization and development effectiveness is not always clear-cut. In the case of the medical equipment supplies mentioned above, for example, the 'free' medical equipment was found to bring with it considerable costs: in one fairly typical case, the estimated value of donated materials represented only 26 percent of total costs, the rest of the budget being used to cover shipping, handling, and administrative costs.[14] On a more general note, it should be remembered that there is no automatic correlation between fundraising efficiency and effective delivery of development

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[13] Kouchner, *Charite Business*, p. 182.

[14] Gilchrist, "Health Help," p. 20.

programs; in many cases, in fact, the relationship may be just the opposite. A high efficiency in fundraising may lead agencies to favour outmoded overseas program strategies simply because they involve low in-Canada costs, or promise a sure fundraising return. Perhaps the clearest example of the latter is child and family sponsorship: sponsorship remains a potent marketing tool, but many agencies are now moving away from such programs, because of high costs and uncertain benefits. Gordon Ramsay of CANSAVE remarks that "focusing on the child makes it easier to fundraise, but the only people who can save the children are the communities themselves."[15] In addition, as Chapter 5 noted, fundraising concerns may at times work against successful development education work, sending precisely the type of simplified – and in some cases degrading – messages development education groups strive to counteract.

Involving Beneficiaries

The second type of mobilization has to do with voluntary contributions of time, money and materials by beneficiary populations. While bilateral and multilateral aid projects often count on such contributions as well, it is often assumed that NGOs have a special talent in this area, owing to long-term involvement with beneficiaries at a relatively direct level. Field observation generally confirmed this assumption; almost all projects visited counted on some contribution from the local population, and in some cases this represented a relatively large proportion of the total project budget. Usually, beneficiary contributions took the form of unskilled labour and/or locally available materials; less commonly, beneficiaries made financial contributions, either in the form of direct donations, or on a user-payment basis. In Jamaica, for example, seven of nine projects visited involved some form of local contribution: in four cases this was primarily labour and in-kind contributions; in one case there was a user-payment scheme; and in two cases locally raised funds were added to the Canadian contribution.

In our study NGOs did not always make the most effective use of local indigenous resources. In some cases for example, skilled labour was brought from outside the beneficiary population, despite the fact that with a small amount of training local people could have taken over the work. An agency's ability to draw upon local resources appears to depend not only on the establishment of strong links to the community, but also on its willingness to view local contributions as an important element of a strategy to promote local participation in (and ultimately control over) a development activity. Properly managed, local resources not only cut project costs directly, they also increase efficiency in a number of indirect ways. For example, contributions of labour speed up project implementa-

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[15] Quoted in *Maclean's* (3 February 1986), p. 25.

tion and reduce variable costs such as administrative and supervisory salaries. More crucially, local input can increase the sense of local 'ownership', helping to ensure that project results will be sustained over the longer term.

Sustainability

Aid projects are often criticized for not producing lasting benefits; instead, it is argued, benefits fade as soon as external support ends. This criticism points out one of the crucial weaknesses of static cost/benefit analysis: even if a project can be demonstrated to produce immediate improvements in the quality of life for the beneficiary population, assessment of its overall efficiency depends on whether the benefits persist. Since aid funds are limited, this means that the project must be sustained with local resources. Some projects, of course, are short-term in nature, such as constructing a road or a health clinic, or mounting an immunization campaign: even for these, however, sustainability of the benefits flowing directly or indirectly from the project is important.

This point has been recognized by various studies of NGO activities. A 1985 evaluation of European Community financed projects concluded that long-term viability was "the most important criterion" of project success.[16] A cost-effectiveness manual prepared by USAID for the evaluation of NGO activities places considerable emphasis on measuring costs in comparison with community resources, as one way of assessing whether a project is able to "make a permanent change in the life of the community."[17]

The difficulty of designing sustainable (i.e., lasting) development activities plagues not only NGOs, but also official donors. In a review of official project aid by bilateral and multilateral donors, the 1986 Cassen report concluded that most projects do succeed in achieving their stated objectives:

> The common conclusion is that some 65 – 75 per cent of projects are found to be satisfactory or highly satisfactory, and most of the remainder problematic but not irreparably so, with a small percentage (in single figures) completely written off.[18]

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[16] de Crombrugghe *et al*, "An Evaluation of CEC Small Development Projects," p. 17.

[17] Robert Nathan Associates, *Cost-Effectiveness Analysis Manual* (Washington, D.C.: USAID, 1985), pp. 27-34.

[18] Robert Cassen & Associates, *Does Aid Work? Report to an Intergovernmental Task Force* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), p. 109. See also the World Bank, *1985 Annual Review of Project Performance Results*, Washington, D.C., 1986; or World Bank, *IDA in Retrospect: The First Two Decades of the International Development Association* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), pp. 61-76.

But the same study notes considerable weaknesses in terms of long-term sustainability of official aid projects. In some types of projects (e.g., institutional support), as many as two-thirds proved not to be sustainable[19], even though many of them were successful in achieving their stated, short-term objectives.

Studies of NGO projects also show somewhat disappointing results. In 1980 the Commission of the European Communities (CEC) sponsored a comparative evaluation of 28 projects co-financed with NGOs and 26 CEC micro-projects. The evaluation concluded that in both cases "long-term functioning ability" was weak; only 6 of 28 micro projects (21 percent) and 5 of 26 NGO projects (19 percent) created a regular source of income to cover operating expenses.[20] On a similar note, the previously mentioned study of U.S. NGO projects in Kenya and Niger found that of 11 projects with ongoing costs, "none of the projects in this category is presently 'paying for itself', i.e., raising enough funds from participants to cover all operations."[21] And a recent study of small NGO projects in Africa found that perhaps 50 percent of projects had a capacity to be self-financing, but only a smaller number were actually self-sufficient in terms of financial and human resources.[22]

Our own field research for the most part covered projects still in operation, and as a result could only deal with *potential* rather than proven sustainability. In general, the findings appear more encouraging than the studies mentioned above, but the record is far from unblemished. As in the Cassen study, projects showed a clear ability to achieve their stated objectives: of the 51 projects surveyed, 32 were deemed to be substantially achieving their objectives, 10 were partially successful in this regard, and only six could be said to be failing to achieve their objectives; in three cases, insufficient information was available to make a judgement. But an inability to ensure sustainable results was equally clear: for 27 projects (53 percent), there was evidence that the project could probably be sustained, wholly or substantially, following the withdrawal of external support; but fully 22 projects (43 percent) were deemed to have little chance of surviving without longer-term infusions of foreign human or financial resources. In two cases (4 percent), insufficient evidence was available to judge project sustainabilty. We judged potential for sustainability by the extent to which ongoing costs could be met by benefi-

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[19] Cassen, *Does Aid Work*, p. 111.

[20] Commission of the European Communities (CEC), *Comparative Evaluation of Projects Co-Financed with NGOs and Micro-Projects: Indicative Synthesis*, Brussels, 26 June 1981.

[21] Development Alternatives Inc., *The Development Impact*, p. 34.

[22] Marie-Christine Gueneau, *Afrique: les petits projets de développement sont-ils efficaces?* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1986), pp. 154-56.

ciaries, or were likely to be taken over by other local sources (e.g., the local government), and the availability of local management skills necessary to maintain project activities without external assistance.[23]

The reasons for the low potential for sustainability of some projects are significant. In nine cases (18 percent – a relatively low percentage), projects did not appear to ensure adequate management capabilities. In these cases, the chief problem was a failure to prepare adequately for the phasing out of expatriate staff: in one project in Jamaica, financial management remained firmly in expatriate hands, despite the fact that expatriate personnel were to be phased out completely over the coming six months. A more common shortcoming was the failure to ensure a means of covering operating costs. In 19 projects (37 percent), we concluded that operating costs could not be covered by local sources, whether from the community or local government. In Mali, for example, a literacy program was dependent on continued external assistance, since neither the local government nor the beneficiary cooperatives could, for the immediate future, absorb the program's recurrent costs. The same was true of a number of service-delivery projects, such as a health centre and an ophthalmologic unit in Haiti.

These results are similar to those of other studies. The CIDA evaluation, for example, found that "for the projects which were not self-sufficient, the primary ongoing need was financial";[24] the European Communities study concluded that (in comparison with 'small' micro-projects directly funded by Northern governments) NGO projects were better able to ensure effective management by local peasant organizations, but less able to ensure financial viability without external assistance.[25]

What explains the failure of some projects to achieve financial self-reliance? While generalization is difficult, a few broad observations can be made. First, NGOs have been more successful in limiting ongoing operating costs of their projects than in designing income-generating activities to meet such costs. In other words, the successful examples are due more to a risk-minimizing strategy (keep ongoing costs as low as possible) than to a strategy which meets the problem head-on.(There are, of course, examples of innovative methods of ensuring project costs are covered. MCC in Haiti, for example, pays animators' full salaries for two years only; after that time, only half salaries are paid automatically, with

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[23] Actual sustainability would in all likelihood be somewhat lower than these figures indicate. In its corporate evaluation of the NGO Program in 1984/85, CIDA surveyed 101 projects, which had been completed between two and five years earlier. It found that 31 percent of projects were self-sufficient at the time of the survey, 50 percent were continuing but not yet self-sufficient, and 20 percent were no longer functioning. CIDA, *Corporate Evaluation Study*, p. 90.

[24] *Ibid.*, p. 90.

[25] CEC, *Comparative Evaluation of Projects*.

additional remuneration based on animators' success in generating increased project revenue.) In part, this reflects the traditional weakness of Canadian NGOs in designing and supporting income-generating activities, but whatever its origins, the emphasis on cost-cutting rather than cost-recovery limits ability to promote sustainable development. It may also restrict the types of projects agencies are able to support, since many activities imply relatively high recurrent costs.

In some cases, the project failure results from unanticipated external forces – changes in crop prices, cutbacks in government spending, or prolonged drought. Similarly, as most studies conclude, sustainable development projects are most difficult to design in low-income countries (e.g., parts of Africa) where infrastructure is often lacking, and government budgets are limited.[26] Yet in most cases, at least part of the problem is NGOs' weakness in project design, monitoring and evaluation. Several analysts have made this point with regard to U.S. NGOs[27], and it is even more applicable to Canadian NGOs, which are generally weaker on the technical aspects of project design than their American counterparts. In several projects, Canadian planners did not give adequate attention to long-term financial requirements; in Peru for instance, an artificial insemination program was successful in improving quality of cattle stock and increasing milk production, but did not tackle the more difficult problem of improving market access for the milk produced. As a result, increase in the incomes of poor cattle farmers was limited, and the project was not able to institute an effective user-payment system which would have given it greater financial independence. Resolution of this problem and others like it requires greater emphasis on project design (including pre-feasibility studies to identify possible sources of ongoing support), as well as careful monitoring of the project so that possible problems (e.g., governmental unwillingness to assume financial responsibility) are identified as early as possible.

Replication

One of the reputed strengths of NGOs is their ability to pioneer innovative activities and approaches, which can then be replicated by official donors or local communities. Many analysts have argued that such replication of project benefits is the most important measure of NGO cost-effectiveness.[28] To a degree, of course, replication will increase the cost-effectiveness of any development project, governmental or non-governmental, but the small size of NGO projects, and the limited re-

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[26] Cassen, *Does Aid Work*, pp. 109-110; World Bank, *IDA in Retrospect*, p. 63.

[27] See, for example, Ellis, or Tendler, *Turning Private Voluntary Organizations into Development Agencies*.

[28] Development Alternatives Inc., *The Development Impact*, p. 22.

sources of most agencies, means that they often can only hope to have a lasting impact if their successes are repeated by others. As one author puts it

> The potential for replication of small-scale projects is of fundamental importance because it is the only way they can surpass the micro-economic level – the necessary condition if they are to be more than limited, isolated experiences, and reach a real dynamic in which new projects are created through a sort of chain reaction.[29]

Such replication can take a variety of forms: replication by official donors or local government, on a similar or expanded scale; a ripple effect as activities spread to neighbouring communities or groups, where activities are reproduced more or less autonomously; or replication by the sponsoring agency in a different setting.[30]

A study of individual projects may not adequately reflect the true extent of replication; instead, it is probably necessary to carry out studies of particular sectors or fields of activity within a given country or region, and trace the spread of innovations over time. The available evidence, however, suggests that NGOs have had at best limited success in ensuring replication of their work.[31] In our own study, we could note few clear examples of replication; even more significantly, very few of the projects we studied were themselves replications of earlier successes of the agency in question or of another NGO. Similarly, the CIDA evaluation found only 11 examples of replication (five by the agency involved, and six by other agencies) in a sample of 101 projects. Given the difficulty of accurately tracking replication of project components, such figures probably underestimate the true extent of replication;[32] nonetheless, it appears that

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[29] Gueneau, *Afrique: les petits projets*, p. 156 (author's translation).

[30] As Gene Ellis points out, the extent to which replication improves cost-effectiveness depends upon a number of factors. First, of course, it is assumed that replication of a project entails no cost (or at least minimal cost) to the original project designers – in Ellis' words, that projects are replicable "by contagion." As well, the extent of cost savings depends upon the efficiency of other sources of investment (e.g., resources used by the agency (e.g., skilled project designers). If such conditions are fulfilled, Ellis concludes, "the overall benefit-cost ratios of projects replicable by contagion might well be higher than projects without such replication possibilities." Ellis, "Making PVOs Count More," p. 206.

[31] *Ibid.*, pp. 204-206; and see Development Alternatives Inc., *The Development Impact*, pp. xiv.

[32] The CIDA evaluation figures do not include the 'spread' of project benefits to individuals or communities beyond the original target group, without the intervention of local or foreign development agencies. This, the evaluation suggests, is the most important 'ripple effect' of NGO programs. Unfortunately, evaluators used varying standards for judging this spread, some of which (e.g., indirect benefits through improved land or labour productivity, or improvements in social welfare) are better seen as indirect project benefits rather than replication *per se*. Still, if the 'spread' factor were included, the overall level of replication would improve. CIDA, *Corporate Evaluation Study*, p. 69. Gueneau's study of small NGO projects in Africa found that approximately 25 percent of projects had some form of multiplier effect, and half had qualities which made future replication possible. Gueneau, *Afrique: les petits projets*, pp. 159-60.

replication has only rarely occurred, and then mostly by accident rather than design.

Effective replication depends upon three key variables. First, to what degree do NGOs support innovative development efforts? Obviously, innovation for its own sake does not necessarily make for good development, but unless NGOs are pioneering new activities, the possibility of successful replication will be greatly reduced. Innovative, however, is not synonymous with 'state of the art'; rather it refers to the introduction of a new tool, technique or approach within a given area, or to a given population. To a great degree, innovation is contextual; what is innovative in one setting may not be in another.[33] Our field research distinguished two broad categories of innovation. Product innovation, in the case of development projects, refers to the introduction of new technologies, techniques or activities (e.g., a new tool or crop). Process innovation, on the other hand, refers to new working relationships, approaches to project design, or forms of cooperation to achieve desired results.

While some analysts have argued that NGOs may not be as innovative as they often claim"[34] evidence from the field suggests a substantial degree of innovation. Of the 51 projects visited, 15 (29 percent) had introduced some form of innovation. Of these, nine projects (18 percent) represented product innovations, such as the introduction of soy-based foods in Jamaica, the establishment of cocoa cooperatives in Haiti, or development of a low-cost treadle pump in Bangladesh. In a further eight projects (16 percent), some form of process innovations was introduced, such as the attempt by a group in Peru to use handicraft production as a tool to raise women slum-dwellers' consciousness of their own situation, or the pioneering work of Sistren in Jamaica in the use of theatre as a tool of popular education. While the percentages of innovative projects (or project components) may appear relatively low, the logic of replication itself suggests that even in an ideal situation, only a portion of NGO projects should be innovative. Moreover, if a less stringent definition of innovation were adopted, several other projects (which introduced standard techniques or approaches to new beneficiary groups) might also be included.

Nonetheless, a number of projects clearly relied on outmoded approaches. Examples of these include a project in Burkina Faso which concentrated on digging open-pit wells (which easily become contaminated) despite the existence of simple and affordable hand-pump technology within the country; and a small-scale credit program in Peru

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[33] Mary Anderson, *Generic Questions for PVO Evaluations*, January 1983, pp. 9-12 (mimeographed).

[34] Jerry van Sant, "The Role of International and Host Country NGOs as Intermediaries in Rural Development," Paper presented to a conference on "Managing Development at the Periphery: Issues in Program Effectiveness and Efficiency in the Third World," University of Ottawa 25-27 September 1986, pp. 3-4, (mimeographed).

which, despite success in its primary objective, had failed to use the provision of credit as a focus for training and other extension work. The reasons for lack of innovation in some projects are not always clear, but it appears that in most cases, it was not so much inadequate technical expertise as an inability to relate effectively to the local community. This was particularly true of process innovations, which involve a complex interaction between implementors and beneficiaries rather than the simple transfer of a skill or technique from the outside in.

The second variable affecting success in replication is the technical feasibility of reproducing past successes. Not all projects can be copied, however hard a NGO might try. There are two main reasons for this. First, some activities may be entirely 'site-specific'. For example, one project in Jamaica dealt with the production of breakfast cereal through a college-based food processing plant. While there was some interest in wider application of this experiment, its success rested on a number of factors not likely to be found elsewhere: the existence of a relatively large urban market accustomed to the consumption of commercial breakfast cereals; the Jamaican government's ban on cereal imports; the existence of a not-for-profit food processing facility with considerable excess capacity; and the relative ease of distribution, owing to Jamaica's good road system, and the cooperation of a commercial distributor. Certainly, the Jamaican market could not support another such enterprise, nor is it likely that a similar set of favorable conditions would occur elsewhere. Second, many activities are by their nature small-scale; as a result, it is doubtful whether official donors or local governments could 'scale-up' these experiments for wider replication. In particular, small projects requiring intensive investments of human resources (e.g., community animation) may be too expensive to replicate on a larger scale. Moreover, interest in some forms of projects – particularly those which focus on community level organization – may not be forthcoming from official sources.

The final variable is the quality and availability of information about successful projects, and it is this factor which appears to be the most serious impediment to effective replication of NGO activities. To date, NGOs as a group have been relatively weak in the area of evaluation, and even weaker in documenting the results of successful interventions. Typically, Canadian agencies have short or non-existent institutional memories: information rests largely with individuals (and thus disappears with staff turnover), and many agencies lack adequate staff to assimilate the results of past experiments. While the trend toward computerization may help solve such problems, results to date are not promising; only 28 percent of questionnaire respondents used computers for project control, as opposed to 68 percent for address lists and fundraising. The ability of Canadian agencies to draw on past experiences in designing

future projects is further weakened by their limited field presence, and by the fact that many agencies are not involved in the process of project design and implementation.

Even more serious than poor information flow within agencies, is the lack of communication among NGOs, and between NGOs and other organizations such as local governments and official donors. The 1980 European Communities' evaluation concluded that

> the integration of projects into the whole development effort was very variable, and often rather poor. There was little real co-ordination between the efforts of NGOs themselves, and not much more between NGOs and governments or official agencies."[35]

Unless information-sharing can be improved, potential for replication will always be limited.

It should also be remembered that replication does not only occur on a project-by-project basis. Some reports[36] suggest that one of the most important 'ripple effects' of NGO work may be its influence on local government policy. Similarly, officials at CIDA argue that one of the most important impacts of Canadian NGOs has been their effect upon Canadian government policy – for example, in terms of CIDA's funding of development work in areas previously considered 'off limits', such as Eritrea and Tigray, South Africa or parts of Central America. Such effects are largely unquantifiable, but they do warn of the dangers of a too narrow perspective on such issues as cost-effectiveness.

Efficiency in Development Education

If efficiency in NGOs' overseas projects depends on their ability to mobilize beneficiary and donor resources, to create self-sustaining development activities, and to promote broader replication of their successes, what are the relevant criteria of efficiency for development education work?

If cost-effectiveness is to be measured solely in terms of NGOs' ability to make development education 'pay for itself', then they have in most cases failed. As was pointed out in Chapter 4, most development education agencies continue to be critically dependent on the federal government, through PPP, for financial support; isolated examples of successful fundraising for development education are in many respects not generalizable to the broader community. Another reflection of this same problem is the continual conflict within PPP (and the development agencies themselves) about whether funding should go to established, ongoing

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[35] CEC, *Comparative Evaluation of Projects.*

[36] *Ibid,* p. 70.

projects or new initiatives. Certainly, as has been pointed out, steps could be taken to improve the public *and* private funding base of development education agencies – for example, fee-for-service arrangements with national NGOs who make use of the resources of local development education agencies such as the learner centres. As with overseas agencies, however, an exclusive concern with the financial side of efficiency may simply lead to cost-cutting (e.g., maintaining low salaries, limiting acquisitions) which is in the long run counter-productive.

In the end, efficiency for development education, as for overseas programs, depends on creating sustainable impact, not just balancing the books. To achieve this goal does *not* demand financial self-sufficiency: the key is not to ensure that agencies or programs are sustainable without external support, but rather that the benefits flowing from them are lasting. Evaluating the precise impact of educational programs is likely to be problematic, particularly given the often meager evaluation resources of development education agencies, and the nonquantifiable nature of outputs (see Chapter 5).

NGOs can, however, take steps to ensure their programs have a lasting impact. In particular, replication of successful activities, and other indirect ripple effects, may be the greatest guarantee of long-term sustainability, and hence efficiency. As the previous chapter noted, the limited resources available for development education may mean that the only true guarantee of impact is the integration of the development education 'message' into the programs of other agencies, groups and institutions. Seen from this perspective, the greatest impediment to efficiency is an attitude of isolationism, which emphasizes individual agency initiatives, rather than the indirect effects – fostering the growth of autonomous, community-based initiatives, or encouraging changes in educational curricula or other government policy – which may be more important in the long run. This will demand a considerable change of outlook, not only from most development educators, but also from those responsible for evaluating their work.

Maximizing Efficiency: Inter-Agency Cooperation

One of the recurring questions asked by Canadians is: why are there so many NGOs? The stock response of the voluntary development community has been to speak of 'strength in diversity', and the advantages of 'pluralism'. Yet neither of these replies attacks the real point of the question: does the proliferation of NGOs imply a poor use of resources; could increased cooperation among agencies lead to greater efficiency? As one NGO worker noted, "Peut-être faudrait-il repenser la création de nombreuses ONG, et . . . consolider les ONG au lieu de les voir pousser comme des champignons."

The advantages of cooperation are not limited to avoiding duplication of effort and expenditures. Cooperation among agencies can be an important investment in future effectiveness, offering opportunities for learning through exchanges of information and experiences, increased specialization through joint programming, or greater impact of small agencies from pooling resources. But cooperation is not a self-evident good, and the advantages of any cooperative venture must be weighed against its financial and non-financial costs.

First, despite the talk of 'common purpose', the NGO community, like Canadian society at large, encompasses a wide variety of activities, views and ideologies, which may frustrate attempts at concerted action. In theory, the diversity of the community provides considerable scope for joint programming: in reality, however, the differences among agencies often engender mistrust and resistance to cooperative ventures. It was the split between development education groups and overseas agencies which precipitated the demise of the Alberta Council for International Cooperation for example, and, in a somewhat similar fashion, CCIC's work is made more difficult by the need to respond to a diverse membership, often at odds.

Second, real or perceived institutional self-interest is often a stumbling block for inter-agency cooperation. This is most common in fundraising, but it also occurs in other areas. Michael Harris, former overseas aid director of OXFAM-UK, argues that one of the most serious impediments to better coordination of international relief efforts in Ethiopia has been the "inbuilt secrecy" within many organizations.[37] In fact, a kind of territorial imperative often seems to affect inter-agency relations, with individual NGOs more interested in solidifying their own reputation in a given area, than in exploring ways of improving effectiveness through cooperation with other agencies, both governmental and non-governmental.

A third point, closely related to the second, is that agencies may be unwilling to sacrifice even a small amount of their autonomy. In a review of cooperation among European agencies working in Africa, Jean Perras notes that "the main obstacle was that the member agencies did not want to lose their autonomy."[38] It is this same fear which has paralyzed most attempts by Canadian NGOs to develop joint strategies for public policy advocacy, whether through CCIC or more specialized agencies such as PAC. To a large degree, this reflects fundraising concerns: many agencies worry that an inter-agency body could take positions which might harm

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[37] Michael Harris, "Ethiopia: Before and After," International Council of Voluntary Agencies, Geneva, no date (mimeographed), p. 77.

[38] Jean Perras, *Hunger in Africa: Preliminary Report* (Brussels: Coopération Internationale pour le Développement et la Solidarité, November 1985), p. 3.

their funding base, public or private. It is also due, however, to the origins and philosophy of most NGOs, which usually arose from independent, grass-roots action, and are mistrustful of bureaucratic structures of any stripe.

Finally, and often most importantly, there are practical obstacles to cooperation. To put it simply, cooperation with other agencies is never costless, in terms of dollars or staff time. Time and again in the field, NGO staff report that they simply cannot afford the time to travel to other parts of the country to confer with their colleagues; similarly, while coordination among development education groups within particular Canadian communities is often quite strong, the costs of air travel make coordination of activities on a regional or national scale more difficult. A consultation of members of learner centres in October 1986 was the first national meeting of this group in the 15-year history of learner centres in Canada, and even then only occurred because CIDA picked up the tab.

As a result of these various impediments, the NGO community has not always realized the potential for inter-agency cooperation. As was pointed out in Chapter 2, there are, of course, various formal NGO collaborative bodies, and an even larger number of informal groupings, both within Canada and in the field. Among the mainstream churches, for example, there are at least eight coalitions and working groups, dealing with development education, refugees, Central America, South Africa, and a variety of other subjects. In many spheres of activity, individual NGOs have carved out relatively secure 'niches', with a degree of respect for each other's territory.

Yet there are other areas where cooperation among agencies is less prevalent, such as government relations, development education, or in-field monitoring of projects. When questionnaire respondents were asked to list the greatest weaknesses of Canadian NGOs, by far the most common response was lack of cooperation among agencies. This is perhaps most obvious in the field of fundraising, where the autonomous or, more correctly, competitive fundraising appeals of individual agencies are carried out with little consideration of the waste involved. As one NGO representative remarked, "la *concertation* est dangereuse quand il y a sur la table un gâteau à partager."

Perhaps more worrisome than the limited number of cooperative ventures has been their defensive motivation. When agencies do work together, it is largely in response to outside pressures. In particular, the deciding factor has often been government policy: NGO groupings are often a reaction to either the 'carrot' of government funding, or the 'stick' of government challenges to NGOs. NGOs need to see cooperation in an active, rather than just a reactive, light.

What are the future chances for inter-agency cooperation? In order to answer this question, it is perhaps helpful to distinguish between two forms of cooperation: coordination and collaboration. Coordination refers to a process of information-sharing, discussion and consensus-building, usually on broad issues affecting the total community. It implies a certain agreement on broad goals and objectives, but usually encompasses a wide variety of more specific objectives and approaches. Coordination usually involves the entire NGO community, whether nationally (for example, an NGO response to the government's green paper on foreign policy, carried out through CCIC), provincially (SCIC's lobbying of the provincial government regarding cutbacks in provincial funding of NGOs), or locally (a calendar of coming events produced by all dev. ed. groups in a given community, or regular meetings of Canadian and local NGOs working in a specific country). Collaboration, on the other hand, refers to a much more active process of joint action, whether in terms of peer review of projects (as in AEA or PAC), or joint programming in overseas or development education projects. Collaboration requires not simply a broad harmony of interests, but rather a convergence of interests, so that concerted action is needed in order to further the aims of any one agency. Collaboration usually occurs on a smaller scale, via small groupings of 'like-minded' agencies or individuals.

Because of its greater intensity, the direct costs of collaboration (e.g., staff time, administrative workload) are significantly higher than for coordination. Yet paradoxically, the indirect costs in terms of institutional self-interest and reduced freedom of action may be less. Certainly, collaboration requires the sacrificing of a greater amount of autonomy to the cooperative venture, but with a relatively small, cohesive 'affinity group', it may be easier for agencies to agree on common policy. This has certainly been the case for many of the inter-church working groups (such as ICFID, Ten Days for World Development, or ICCHRLA), where a common value base has helped lay the groundwork for joint overseas programs, development education work, and advocacy. In coordination, on the other hand, the very diversity of the agencies involved may make it more difficult to overcome institutional self-interest and arrive at a shared position; witness, for example, CCIC's difficulty in arriving at a common position on public policy advocacy, discussed in Chapter 4.

Much of future cooperation among agencies (whether of a coordinating or collaborative nature) will continue to occur on an *ad hoc* basis, outside of any formal structures. There will continue to be a need for more formal groupings of agencies, and for more broadly based coordination. If this is to be effective, it will have to actively involve the widest possible cross-section of agencies – by making coordinating bodies such as CCIC more responsive to regional interests, for example, or by promoting more regular information-sharing among agencies in the field. Yet the logic of

the preceding paragraphs suggests that increasingly, agencies will turn to less broadly based, but more active, forms of cooperation. While it is still too early to pronounce on their ultimate success or failure, organizations such as SAP, PAC or Solidarité Canada Sahel are already providing glimpses of what may be possible.

Conclusion

In a 1986 speech to a conference in Ottawa, Jerry van Sant, a U.S. consultant specializing in the evaluation of NGO projects, argued that in the past NGOs and the observers of their activities have paid more attention to "operational performance" than to the "larger significance" of NGO activities.[39] In a sense, this typifies the NGO approach to the issue of cost-effectiveness. NGOs have traditionally emphasized their low costs and ability to raise funds and in this sense they *are* efficient: administrative costs are relatively low and many agencies have proven their tremendous capacity to attract donations from Canadians.

But the desire to remain 'lean' – most often expressed in terms of pressure to keep operating costs low – may in the long run be counter-productive. As the above discussion has outlined, the most important determinants of the efficiency of NGO activities are long-term in nature, and often not limited to a given project: sustainability of project benefits; replication of successful experiments by other actors; and, at least in some areas, more effective information-sharing and collaboration among NGOs.

In each of these areas, success depends less upon cutting costs than upon deploying resources strategically, in order to maximize impact. Rather than pursuing efficiency through cost-cutting measures alone, agencies will increasingly need to invest resources in measures which increase their long-term impact, even at the risk of an increase in short-term costs. In many cases, paradoxically, agencies will have to spend *more* if they wish to increase their efficiency: for most, accustomed to working with limited resources, this may demand a considerable change in attitude.

[39] van Sant, "The Role of International and Host Country NGOs," p. 3.

7 Cooperation: Working Toward Partnership

The building of a bridge begins – not from one side, but from each side
– Raymond Moriyama

Voluntary development agencies routinely claim that one of the principal differences between their operations and those of others – official donors, local governments, or private sector firms – lies in the way in which they relate to the people with whom they work. Thus, for example, NGOs speak of their 'grass-roots' style, of a 'participatory' approach to development, of development 'from the bottom up', of 'fostering local capacities for self-reliance', or of 'empowering' communities and 'facilitating' development. The common thread running through all these self-descriptions is a respect for the people with whom they work. This in turn implies a particular view of the development process itself: first, development lies not so much in the delivery of outside inputs as in the uncovering and strengthening of local capabilities: second, development is by definition a process: and third, development deals primarily with people and the institutions through which people relate to one another, not physical or financial resources.

This approach is perhaps best summed up by the term 'development cooperation'. While not widely used in English (where the phrase 'development assistance' has predominated), the concept of development cooperation has long been used in French, to describe a development approach based not just on a simple transfer of resources, but on ideals of equality, solidarity, partnership and participation. As such, it expresses much which is distinctive not only about the work of development NGOs but voluntary activity as a whole. As Samuel Martin notes in a recent survey of charitable giving in Canada,

> altruistic behaviour ultimately attains a state of mutuality which recognizes that *alter* and *ego* are inseparable elements, each being essential to the other's welfare, a partnership founded on respect, dignity, equality, harmony.[1]

Help or Self-Help?

Development NGOs usually emphasize the importance of indigenous participation, in promoting equitable, sustainable development. Self-help and self-reliance are terms so widely used that one author notes a project

[1] Martin, *An Essential Grace*, p. 123.

in Latin America where the implementors, wanting to stress the unique features of their approach, referred to it as "unaided self-help."[2] The notion of self-help, or participation, implies that beneficiaries should be involved in development projects – not only in implementing them, but also in identifying needs, planning project approaches, and evaluating results.

Over the years a considerable body of research has accumulated to support this view, suggesting that participation of local people is one of the most important factors in successful grass-roots development. Thus, for example, CIDA's corporate evaluation of the NGO program concluded:

> when development success, not just objective achievement, is sought, access to technical and administrative resources is still important . . . but two additional factors need be present, namely, community participation in the project and soundness of the project's design. The latter two should enable the project to sustain its benefits over time by making sure there is, among other things, some long-term planning at the beginning (soundness of design) and some popular interest and willingness to keep the project going at the later stages (community involvement).[3]

A study of small development projects financed by the Commission of the European Communities similarly concluded that "projects may sometimes succeed without the intended beneficiaries being actively involved in needs identification but almost inevitably fail where they are excluded from the initial planning phase."[4]

However the other general observation arising from such studies is that the success of NGOs and other actors in promoting participatory approaches has been, at best, uneven. In our own sample of 51 overseas projects, we made a rough estimate of the degree of local participation, with the following results: in 22 percent of cases there was essentially no participation of beneficiaries; in 24 percent a low level of participation; in 36 percent a moderate level; and in only 18 percent a high level of participation.[5]

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[2] Tendler, *Turning Private Voluntary Organizations into Development Agencies*, p. 19.

[3] CIDA, *Corporate Evaluation Study*, p. 80.

[4] de Crombrugghe, *et al*, *"An Evaluation of CEC Small Development Projects,"* p. 23.

[5] There is, of course, a certain degree of imprecision in any such ranking. Our estimates were based upon consideration of three factors: breadth of community involvement (i.e., just local leaders, or a broader spectrum of the population?); timing of involvement (i.e., in which phases of the project); and, as much as possible, intensity of involvement. CIDA, in its corporate evaluation, judged the overall level of participation to be slightly higher: in 35 percent of projects there was a high level of participation, in 46 percent a moderate level, and in only 19 percent a low level. See CIDA, *Corporate Evaluation Study*, p. 90. Differences between the two studies are due at least in part to the different samples of projects used.

While the ideal of indigenous participation expresses much that is distinctive about NGO work, at times it confuses rather than enlightens. NGOs often assume that a participatory approach to development is positively and uniformly correlated with success: having defined development as a process of participation, they conclude that introducing participatory approaches automatically constitutes good development.

But, as Judith Tendler argues, what is generally referred to by NGOs and their observers as 'participation' actually consists of a variety of operational strategies, ranging along a spectrum from 'genuine' representative participation of beneficiary populations, through top-down but sensitive decision making by a local or foreign NGO, to local elite decision making.[6] Nor, she suggests, is effective development associated only with the first of these strategies:

> In some cases of success, participation by beneficiaries will have occurred; in other cases where the poor were reached and their lives improved, strong local elite leadership or the PVO itself will have masterminded the activity, with little participation involved.[7]

What is participation then, and how does it vary from situation to situation? To answer this question, Mary Anderson[8] has compiled a set of "generic" questions which can be asked of any NGO project. It is instructive to apply these questions to our own field evidence, as well as to the results of other studies and evaluations.

Who Participates?

This is perhaps the key question in the participation debate, and yet it is often the one which gives NGOs and other donors most trouble. NGOs tend to focus on 'the community', usually defined in geographic terms, as the unit of participation. Because of this focus, divisions within that community are at times overlooked or downplayed. As Tendler says,

> Because communities are often portrayed . . . as internally harmonious and without potential for class conflict, this may have made it easier to assume that decision-making by village elites was the same as, and had the same distributional results as, participation.[9]

To be fair, most NGO representatives interviewed in the field were aware of the danger of reinforcing exploitive relationships within a given community. But it is difficult, particularly for expatriate field officers with little

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[6] Tendler, *Turning Private Voluntary Organizations into Development Agencies*, p. 15.

[7] *Ibid.*, p. 9.

[8] Anderson, "Generic Questions for PVO Evaluations," pp. 3-8. See also, Jan van Heemst, *The Role of NGOs in Development: Some Perspectives for Further Research* (The Hague: The Institute of Social Studies, 1982), pp. 42-44.

[9] Tendler, *Turning Private Voluntary Organizations into Development Agencies*, p. 37.

prior knowledge of the community in question, to understand all the subtle gradations of income and status within a community which appears relatively homogeneous to an outside observer. Moreover, even when such divisions are recognized, there is often little choice but to work with the community's natural or pre-selected leaders – in effect the community elite. Even when the entire community is free to choose its own representative to work on a project committee, the person thus chosen will often be a traditional community leader; and if training is involved, it is almost inevitable that community representatives will be chosen who belong to an educated elite.

There are, however, ways to overcome this situation, at least in part. An NGO in Haiti, for example, had the community at large evaluate the performance of their representatives. To help the people in the unfamiliar task of confronting a leader, the NGO provided additional literacy and administrative training (e.g., basic financial skills), and as much as possible attempted to spread responsibility among various individuals. Similarly, in a community development project in Jamaica, women were encouraged to join actively in group meetings, where previously the views of a few strong, vocal male members had held sway. The lesson in all of this seems to be that a certain degree of intervention may be indispensable to effective participation; rather than merely accepting existing divisions as immutable facts of life, NGOs must offer community members realistic alternatives to reliance on existing elites.

In Which Project Phase?

Community participation in the implementation or construction phase of projects is now something of a commonplace, not only for NGOs, but also for official donors working in community development. In 74 percent of projects visited in the field for this study, beneficiaries were involved in some way in the process of project implementation. In most cases where they were not involved it was usually because the project did not lend itself to community participation – for example, a project that sent teachers to Zimbabwe, one that supplied newsprint for textbooks in Jamaica, or other projects that involved service delivery. For the most part, however, participation in implementation means supplying 'voluntary' labour; the people have little or no control over the project. At times this amounts to little more than an exploitive way of financing development activities, since the voluntary labour is usually supplied by the poorest members of a community, who have no other resources to contribute. In many of the projects visited for this study, the use of voluntary labour was seen as a means of decreasing costs and speeding implementation rather than as critically contributing to the success of the project. Where this is the case, projects may be successful, but the local population's ability to further its own aspirations without external assistance is often left unchanged.

Real participation also implies active community involvement in decision making, and hence at other stages in the project cycle: needs identification, design, monitoring and evaluation. But participation at these stages is more difficult to achieve, and therefore far less prevalent. While beneficiaries are often 'consulted' during needs identification and design, and 'surveyed' in evaluation and monitoring, their degree of active participation in such processes is often slight. As Figure 7.1 shows, in projects surveyed in the field only 36 percent involved active participation by beneficiaries in the design phase, and just 26 percent involved beneficiaries in evaluation. There are, of course, examples of effective participation: in the community development project in Jamaica mentioned above for instance, members of a cooperative have steered the project through each stage, including designing and undertaking a participatory evaluation of preliminary results.

How Much?

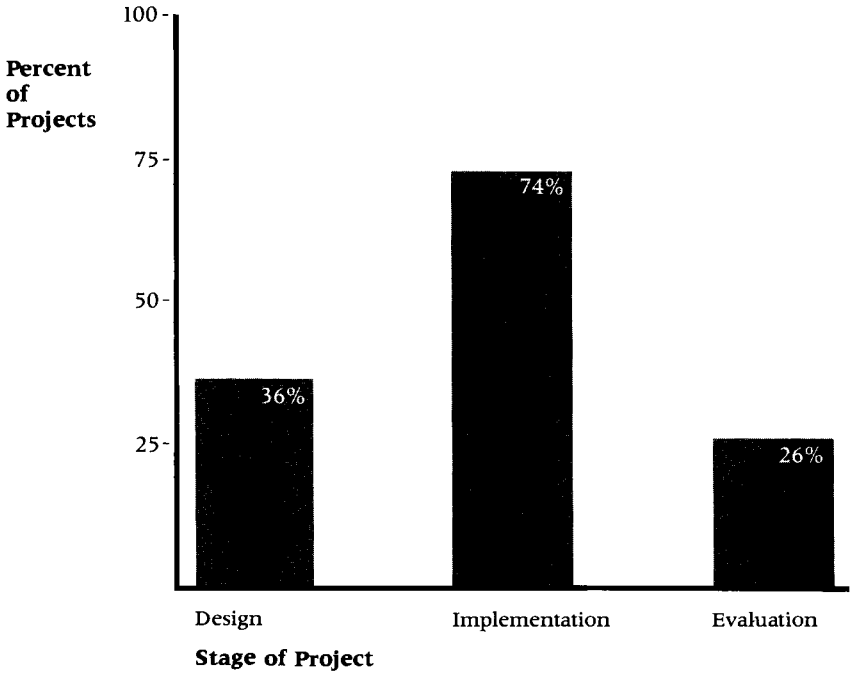
This is the most difficult question to answer with any precision, since judging the extent of participation requires a thorough understanding of the history of a project and the dynamics of a given community. A few comments can be made, however. First, intensity of participation is not necessarily equivalent to frequency of participation. Other things being equal, it is preferable to have more rather than fewer community meetings or public forums – in other words, more opportunities for beneficiaries to express their views (although it should always be kept in mind that participation carries with it certain costs for the participants, particularly for women and the poor, who generally have the least time for consultation). But the crucial variable is how much opportunity there is to influence the course of a project, which depends at least as much on the style of decision making adopted as the frequency of consultation. Second, as with other aspects of the participation debate, the amount and type of participation which is feasible and desirable varies from project to project.

With What Results?

This leads to the final point. What difference does participation of beneficiaries make to the ultimate impact of a given project? Analysts generally suggest that participation, particularly in the design phase of a project, affects project impact in three ways: it increases the likelihood of attaining a project's stated objectives; it increases the sustainability of a given intervention; and it promotes a more equitable distribution of project benefits. In our own field study, it was only possible to place attention on the first two of these advantages, but all three are of undoubted importance.

Figure 7.1

Participation of Beneficiaries in Overseas Projects

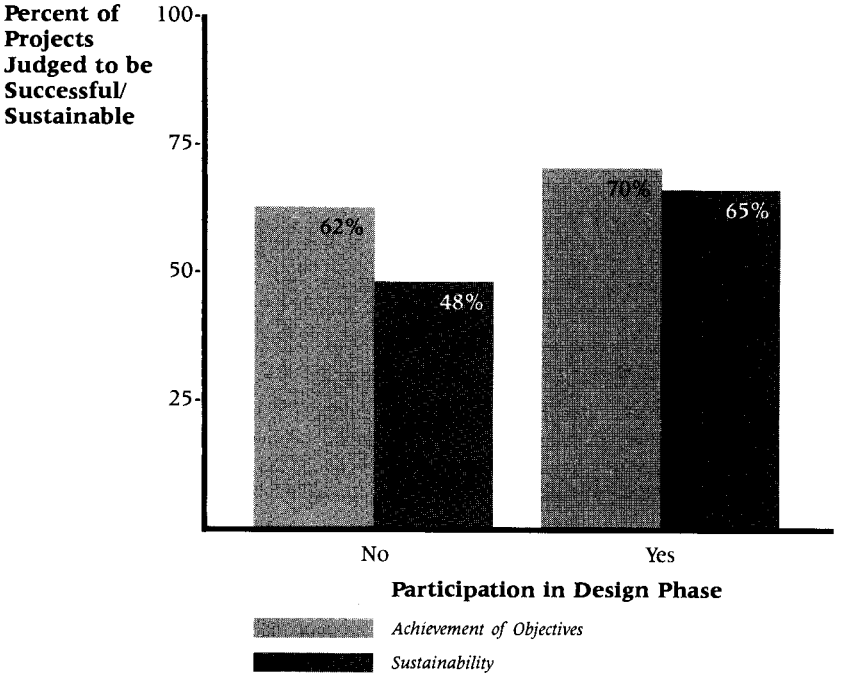


As Figure 7.2 shows, evidence from the field does suggest a correlation between participation of beneficiaries in project design and project success, both in terms of the achievement of stated objectives and the sustainability of projects over the long term. Projects in which beneficiaries were actively involved in defining their needs and designing strategies to meet these needs were slightly more likely to achieve their stated objectives, and significantly more likely to be sustainable once external funding ceases.

Yet the relationship is not entirely clear-cut. While certain projects combined high participation levels with a high rate of achievement of objectives, the opposite was often true as well: projects which were relatively non-participatory at times showed considerable ability to achieve stated objectives. There are two explanations for this. First, participation, while important, is not sufficient to overcome deficiencies in project design or management. Second, as mentioned earlier, much depends on the type of project in question: many of the large-scale service delivery projects implemented by expatriate NGOs can achieve their immediate objectives without substantial community involvement in decision making. A rural

Figure 7.2

Relationship Between Participation of Beneficiaries in Design Phase and Project/Program Success



road maintenance project in Bangladesh, for example, was very successful in attaining its objectives of road maintenance and employment creation for destitute women, despite the fact that there was no involvement of the women in decision making. Similarly, two separate water supply projects visited in Peru enjoyed a high success rate, despite the fact that beneficiaries had at best limited input in the design phase. It should be noted however that if projects do not enlist participation at the design stage the skills, experience and knowledge of implementors become more critical than ever. Moreover, part of the logic of participation is the freedom to make mistakes; as local communities take over control of aspects of a project, they must be allowed to work at their own pace and on their own initiative, even if this means delays in achieving stated objectives.

The correlation between participation and benefit sustainability is stronger, but even here there are some exceptions. Some 65 percent of projects which involved beneficiaries in project design showed considerable likelihood of sustainability. But almost half of the projects which

were *not* participatory could make the same claim. This suggests that the relationship between benefit sustainability and participation is more ambiguous than is often assumed. According to accepted theory, participation is important to sustainability because it allows beneficiaries to develop the skills to take on project activities once external assistance subsides, and because it promotes a sense of community 'ownership' of a project, so that beneficiaries will contribute their own time, energy and resources to ensure that benefits are lasting. But as was pointed out in Chapter 6, the primary constraint upon the sustainability of NGO projects is not a lack of human resources or community support, but the more mundane problem of ensuring that adequate financial resources are available to cover ongoing costs. In certain types of projects, this may depend more on the availability of local government funding, or the implementors' ability to design effective income-generating schemes, than on the degree of popular participation.

As in other areas, participation is perhaps best seen as one factor in promoting equitable distribution of benefits: on its own, it is neither sufficient, nor even in all cases necessary. Tendler in particular notes that in certain cases, sensitive elite leadership can go hand in hand with a fair distribution of benefits, particularly where there is a tradition within a community of patron-client relationships in which the privileges of leadership are offset by corresponding responsibilities. Again, much depends upon the type of project in question, and the types of benefits flowing from it: some outputs are essentially indivisible 'public goods' (e.g., roads, health clinics) which are not susceptible to elite control; others are more divisible (livestock, agricultural credit, fertilizers and other inputs) and thus can be appropriated by a local elite.

It is clear from the preceding discussion that participation, while not a panacea, does have important effects on project impact in certain cases, and subject to the constraints of project design and staff quality. Even more importantly, it is clear that if local communities are excluded from the design and implementation of development activities, they have less opportunity to learn from these interventions, and so are less able to further their own goals without external assistance; while project impact and participation may not always be closely related, participation is clearly central to a process of endogenous development.

NGOs' efforts at instituting participatory development processes have been uneven. What factors account for this – or, to put it differently, what must NGOs do to support participatory approaches?

As has been said, to a certain extent the feasibility of a participatory approach depends on the community within which the NGO is working. In some communities, the existence of structures for citizen participation make the NGO's job much easier: in Lima, for example, one of the

squatter communities which ring the city has a highly developed system of block committees, women's organizations, and citizen's groups – the remnants of government attempts in the mid-1970s to promote popular participation. As a result, community organization and animation there are easier than in other squatter communities. Similarly, when an agency is working with a homogeneous group of clients – women's organizations, unions in a particular industry – rather than a geographically-defined community their task may be simplified. Beyond this level, however, one can also point to a number of factors relating to the strategy adopted by the funding NGO.

First is the degree of flexibility in implementation, particularly with regard to time schedules. Participation of beneficiaries means working at the speed of the community, and being open to changes coming from the bottom-up. This means setting relatively open-ended objectives for projects, and remaining open to changes in course and unexpected benefits as well as costs. In fact, there is a certain contradiction between participation and the type of formalized, quantitative evaluation procedures practiced by some NGOs, or demanded by government funders. To this extent at least, a rigid 'project format' – as opposed to an approach stressing a longer-term process of development – may be inimical to participation.

Second, the autonomy of field staff or local partners is crucial. The more authority field personnel is given to discuss and make changes as community circumstances evolve, without constantly having to refer to the head office, the more the project will be able to tap local initiatives. However a simple 'laissez-faire' attitude is rarely a workable alternative. In our field study, it was possible to isolate three different approaches to the issue of local autonomy: a *carte blanche* approach, where the implementing agent has almost total control; a 'controlled' approach where autonomy exists, but within pre-set limits and subject to close monitoring; and a 'planned and managed' approach, where on-the-ground control is carefully built into the whole process of project selection, implementation and evaluation. Of the three approaches, it is the first which is perhaps the least desirable: in one project in Bangladesh, devolution of responsibility to local staff, without any means of ensuring communication with the funding agency, resulted in inadequate monitoring, and a consequent failure to compensate for flaws in the original project design.

This leads to the final factor. In the field, the importance of skilled, experienced and sensitive implementors has been proven time and time again. Indeed, a shift to a participatory approach probably puts greater demands on implementors than non-participatory techniques – skill requirements are higher, but the emphasis is on facilitative skills, rather than the capacity to 'do' development. Perhaps even more important is the familiarity with the local context. In this area, locally engaged staff or

local NGOs probably have an advantage over expatriate staff. In the majority of cases, donor NGOs have chosen to work via local NGOs, or to gradually integrate local staff into positions of responsibility. In a significant minority of projects, however, top-level positions remain in foreign hands, particularly where this involves financial control. All too often, the words of an aid worker in Mali ring true: "with the presence of expatriates, the local people keep filling in the forms, but never have the key to the safe." On the other hand, working through local staff or an indigenous NGO is not in itself a guarantee of effectiveness, nor does it obviate the need for ongoing monitoring by the funding NGO.

The Gender Agenda: The Participation of Women

Since the mid-1970s, donor agencies and development theorists have increasingly stressed the important role of women in the development process, and the shortcomings of aid projects which overlook them. A growing body of evidence suggests that the integration of women is important not simply for reasons of equity, but also on efficiency grounds: effective development, we have learned, cannot take place if women are excluded. Yet the record for involving women remains disappointing as one article remarked,

> it is evident that project implementation has lagged far behind achievements in research and policy . . . a welfare orientation has prevailed in the execution of projects for low income women throughout the decade.[10]

Some analysts suggest that the record of NGOs in dealing with the issues of women in development may be better than that of other donors: Robert Cassen, for example, argues that NGOs "have particularly important parts to play in addressing women's situations."[11] But while our research suggests that NGO performance in this regard has been positive in at least some respects, there are clear barriers to the better integration of women (and women's concerns) into NGO projects.

In 25 (49 percent) of the overseas projects we surveyed, there had been a deliberate effort to involve women as beneficiaries and/or staff. In 23 projects (46 percent) activities had been planned to take into account women's needs, often through a special component for women. But in few projects (16, or 33 percent) were local women involved in project design. This result suggests that despite the increasing attention paid to women in development planning, project designers often adopt a paternalistic attitude toward women – designing activities *for* women rather

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[10] Mayra Buvinic, "Projects for Women in the Third World: Explaining Their Misbehaviour," *World Development* (May 1986), p. 653.

[11] Cassen *et al*, *Does Aid Work*, p. 61.

than working with them. In part, this simply reflects the low levels of beneficiary participation outlined in the previous section, but it is also clear that women are, on the whole, far less actively involved in program design than men. Of the 16 projects in which women were involved in design, six were projects specifically geared to women. Thus, while participation rates were high in 'women's projects' (only one of seven of such projects failed to involve women in design), only 21 percent of projects *not* specifically targeting women involved women in project design.

The implications of failing to ensure participation of women are by now becoming well known.[12] Projects which aim at boosting agricultural productivity by introducing new crops or technologies may save time, but often result in what was a formerly unpaid activity being taken over by men for pay. And if the time saved is spent in working longer hours in the fields, a project may actually increase women's productivity without giving them any more control over their lives. Too often, women's concerns are treated as an 'add-on', with the result that women spend more time carrying out the additional tasks – or in the task of participation itself – without any compensating reduction in their regular workload. Finally, long-term sustainability of projects may often be frustrated by a failure to adequately understand the gender division of labour within a community. In Peru, a maintenance manual for rural water supply systems, jointly produced by an NGO and the Ministry of Agriculture, did not feature a single woman in its illustrations, despite the fact that women were responsible for much of the day-to-day maintenance (and were being encouraged by project implementors to take part in local maintenance committees).

Perhaps the most frequent response to the poor integration of women into development efforts has been the design of specific projects (or project components) for women. Match International, an Ottawa-based NGO founded in 1976, focuses entirely on small-scale projects for women. Other NGOs such as CUSO, Development and Peace and OXFAM-Canada support a variety of animation and income-generating activities via local NGOs and women's groups. But attention to women's needs has not, as a rule, spilled over to the NGO community at large. As a result, the CIDA evaluation of the NGO program notes, there remains

> a strong tendency for most of the projects directed to women to be in the field of social welfare, home economics, child care and nutrition, or in a narrow range of jobs stereotyped as being good for women only.[13]

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[12] See, for example, Anderson, "Generic Questions for PVO Evaluations."

[13] CIDA, *Corporate Evaluation Study*, p. 87.

Even where this is not the case, women's projects are at times hampered by their small scale, and isolation from other development efforts. Unfortunately, community development programs often neglect to integrate women's concerns: the CIDA evaluation found that in the majority of cases,

> beneficial effects for women were . . . moderate and indirect, largely a trickle-down from the overall beneficial effects of the projects on the community.[14]

One reason for the often disappointing record of NGOs with regard to women may be the internal structures of donor NGOs and local partners. As Table 7.1 shows, women are over-represented in support staff positions in Canadian NGOs (representing 85 percent of such positions), but constitute only 38 percent of management positions. This is higher than the rate for the Canadian labour force as a whole, where women made up only 31 percent of managerial and administrative positions in 1984[15], but still gives cause for concern.[16] Women are also underrepresented in NGO field staff positions, and many Third World agencies responsible for project implementation are dominated by male staff. A 1985 study by the International Coalition for Development Action (ICDA) found that the underrepresentation of women in Northern NGOs was even more severe on decision-making bodies (boards, etc.) than in staff positions.[17] There is, of course, no automatic correlation between the involvement of women within NGOs and their ability to work effectively with women in the Third World, but it stands to reason that women's concerns can be furthered by fuller integration of women within Canadian agencies. As a first step, further action is needed to remove the systemic barriers to greater participation of women in NGOs, through more flexible working conditions, better child-care facilities, and adequate parental leave.

Beyond this, there is a need to regularize and institutionalize NGOs' treatment of gender issues. A 1985 survey by CCIC noted that only 25 percent of NGOs surveyed had planning or evaluation guidelines dealing with the involvement of women, despite the fact that 70 percent

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[14] *Ibid.*, p. 87.

[15] Statistics Canada, *The Labour Force* (Ottawa: Supply and Services Canada, December 1984), p. 51.

[16] Involvement of women is even lower at the executive director (or equivalent) level. Of 130 respondents to a questionnaire to agency directors, only some 25 percent were female. Furthermore, while aggregate staffing figures do not indicate any significant correlation between agency size and representation of women in management positions, this is clearly the case for executive director positions. Of the 25 female-headed agencies which provided data on agency budgets, 19 (76 percent) had budgets under $1 million in 1984, compared to 60 percent of *all* responding agencies.

[17] International Coalition for Development Action (ICDA), *The Role and Status of Women in Development NGOs*, Brussels, March 1985, pp. 6-11.

Table 7.1

Female Staff as a Percentage of Total Staff, 1984
(n = 104)

Staff Category	Percentage Female
Management	38.6
Support	85.0
Project Administration	52.1
Development Education	54.7
Fundraising	40.7
Other	62.6
TOTAL	**62.9**

Source: Questionnaire data.

had activities related to women.[18] Recent changes in CIDA guidelines for project submissions will require agencies to include information on the project's impact on women. In fact, CIDA is widely regarded as being in the forefront of the donor community in terms of its attention to gender issues, and NGOs could perhaps learn some lessons from CIDA's experiences. For example, CIDA has concluded that planning guidelines, while important, are on their own insufficient, and must be accompanied by training in specific skills and approaches. 'Women in development training' has now been provided to all of CIDA's head office program staff, as well as some field staff and consultants. While certain NGO representatives have participated in the CIDA courses, there may be value in a more widely available training program for agency personnel. NGOs not directly involved in project implementation may also need to take steps to sensitize Third World NGOs and other partners to the importance of gender issues.

The Emergence of Southern NGOs

One of the chief means of fostering participation is to identify and strengthen the contribution of indigenous agencies. Certain agencies, such as the Red Cross, the YM/YWCA or many of the churches, have long supported local voluntary institutions, internationalizing their structures by creating and strengthening local counterparts in the countries where they work. Since the late 1970s, however, support for local NGOs has emerged as a key element in NGO strategy for promoting development,

[18] See Lise Latrémouille, "Women in Canadian Development NGOs: An Overview," *The Newsletter* (CCIC), vol. 9, no. 3 (August 1985), pp. 1, 6.

with an increasing number of agencies channelling some or all of their assistance through the local voluntary sector. In our sample of 51 projects, 22 (43 percent) were implemented by an indigenous NGO, as compared to 15 (29 percent) by a Canadian agency, and 14 (27 percent) by an international affiliate.

The increasing prominence of Southern NGOs results from two separate trends. First, the role of indigenous agencies has become more important as donor NGOs' perceptions of development have evolved to emphasize participation, self-reliance and the empowerment of the poor. These ideas, based on a concept of development as a process rather than a simple transfer of resources or skills, tend to increase the importance of locally based organizations over foreign ones. Paradoxically many of the distinctive features of Canadian NGOs which have already been identified by this study as areas of weakness, such as staffing and resource constraints and limited field presence, have put them in a favourable position to promote indigenous Southern agencies. As a result, it is not surprising that to a far greater extent than U.S. voluntary organizations, Canadian agencies have relied on Southern counterparts to identify and implement the projects they fund.

A second, more significant trend has been the upsurge in the sheer numbers of such organizations; whether these originated as offshoots of Northern counterpart organizations, or as middle class charities, or as organizations started by development activists, it was inevitable that they would seek a larger role in the planning and implementation of development projects. Many such organizations have already skillfully used their areas of comparative advantage – lower costs, familiarity with local socio-political norms, and greater linguistic and cultural affinity – to take over larger-scale service delivery programs. BRAC in Bangladesh for example, has several thousand employees and a nation-wide training program in oral rehydration therapy, while Sarvodaya in Sri Lanka has workers active in thousands of villages.

Unfortunately, on the whole the notion of partnership between Northern and Southern NGOs has up to now been more rhetorical than real. Motivated by both cost considerations and their own limited field capacity, donor agencies 'use' Southern NGOs as channels to disburse funds, (and in return receive progress reports), or undertake occasional monitoring visits. Either way the relationship is almost entirely a financial one, with little exchange of experiences, information or skills. The CIDA evaluation notes that of those projects in which a Canadian agency funded a NGO, less than half involved any direct personal contact; where this did occur, it usually took the form of visits to the project by donor agency staff; visits by Southern NGO personnel to Canada were far less

prevalent.[19] Where the recipient indigenous agency is receiving funding from a variety of sources, from Canada and other countries, the relationship may be even more arm's length.

The overseas projects selected for this study were assessed for the degree of support for indigenous agencies and it was found that 27 projects (53 percent) aimed to strengthen a local voluntary organization. Canadian support for some Southern NGOs (Proshika in Bangladesh, Sistren in Jamaica, DESCO in Peru) has been crucial. But in many cases the ability of Canadian agencies to strengthen their local counterparts is seriously constrained by the one-dimensional relationship (involving only financial transfers) and the lack of practical development skills and experience among so many Canadian NGOs. The CIDA evaluation of the NGO program concluded that only about 25 percent of projects resulted in significant strengthening of a local voluntary institution; the most frequent positive outcome was "an enhanced reputation" for an already-established agency[20] rather than a transfer of skills from Canadian to indigenous agency. In fact, because of their limited capacity to identify projects and/or partners, many Canadian agencies prefer to work with established indigenous NGOs; the result is that a few local agencies with proven track records receive funds from as many as half a dozen Canadian NGOs, as well as various European or American agencies.

Southern NGOs are beginning to press for a re-orientation of their relationship with Northern NGOs, toward a two-way exchange of information and experience, and an ethos of mutual accountability. For Canadian agencies, closer contacts with implementing agencies may help to improve project monitoring, and provide a valuable resource for development education efforts. But it may also confront Northern NGOs with the implications of their oft-repeated claim that their goal is to 'work themselves out of a job', or, more accurately, out of the job which they have traditionally filled.

For those Canadian NGOs that act primarily as funders this does not represent such a major shift, but it could have a profound impact on their public image. Many agencies in their advertising and fundraising material tend to portray themselves as the 'active ingredient in the development stew': understandably they highlight their own role as a justification for seeking support, particularly during emergency appeals. Many indigenous organizations are beginning to complain that this no longer reflects the real division of labour and the growing responsibility which they are taking for the development of their own communities. During the recent African famine, several Ethiopian visitors to the United States expressed

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[19] CIDA, *Corporate Evaluation Study*, p. 54.

[20] *Ibid.*, p. 71.

concern at the demeaning nature of many of the fundraising appeals and suggested that less aid might be preferable to entrenching an image of Africans as devoid of dignity, hope or ability. That such a concern is well-founded is borne out by the finding of the Decima study of Canadian attitudes: a majority (73 percent) of respondents expressed doubt that African governments, or Africans themselves (53 percent), would do everything necessary to improve the situation in Africa. As Decima reports:

> these perceptions may be fundamental issue areas for the public, and ones that ultimately limit support for famine relief in the absence of a strong and emotional media presence.[21]

Decisions concerning which projects are to be funded are still made mainly by donor organizations. Only a few agencies have brought overseas representatives onto their boards, and fewer still onto their project selection committees. For most agencies the authority to approve projects, to spend money, rests in Canadian hands. Some progress in instituting a more equal relationship between Northern and Southern NGOs has been made. The churches, confronted by strong and assertive church organizations in the South, pioneered various forms of power-sharing, through structures such as the Asia Partnership for Human Development (APHD). Over a dozen secular agencies followed suit with the South Asia Partnership, which was set up in 1981 with two overriding objectives: to identify and support small locally based community groups, and to share decision making over the allocation of resources with people in the south Asian countries in which SAP operates.

The experience of APHD, SAP, and other such efforts demonstrates that beyond the rhetoric of cooperation and shared goals, building a more equal relationship demands commitment, trust and adherence to some common underlying philosophy of development. If such structures are seen by the donor agencies purely as project-processing machines, relieving them of the burden of decision making but also of the responsibility for the quality of the work, they serve less as steps on the path to more equitable relationships than as another way of distancing donors from the real and difficult choices which must be made in allocating resources. Avoiding this temptation is not easy, In the case of SAP in Bangladesh, a significant number of local NGO projects funded by Canadian SAP members suffered from deficiencies in design, monitoring and follow-up. On the other hand, the SAP mechanism allowed substantial resources to be mobilized by donor agencies which do not have field staff and would not therefore have been able to reach small groups. Those agencies which have participated have benefited from the greater local knowledge of their

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[21] Canadian Emergency Coordinator/African Famine, *Canadians and Africa: What Was Said*, p. 24.

Asian counterparts, and in some cases are beginning to move toward the longer-term goal, that of developing relations of partnership, in its true sense, with some of the local community groups.

In recent years, several other inter-agency bodies have been formed which aim specifically at improving Canadian NGOs' capacities to support and work with indigenous Third World NGOs. Solidarité Canada Sahel, for example, groups a number of agencies with programs in the Sahel countries of West Africa. The most recent example is Partnership Africa Canada, formed in 1986 as the successor to Africa Emergency Aid. PAC unites some 70 Canadian agencies, and its mandate gives primacy to the strengthening of African NGOs "in order that Africans can become the agents of their own development."[22] Eligible activities include human resource training, research and analysis, networking, increasing financial self-reliance, and enhancing local operational capabilities. As with the other groupings, designing such new activities will be difficult, but PAC shows considerable promise in helping agencies to overcome the limitations of small size, and the constraints imposed by the limited information base and low field capacity of many Canadian agencies.

The Direct Funding Debate

Donor NGOs are not alone in beginning to recognize the growing presence and capacity of Southern voluntary development agencies. Gradually, official aid agencies such as CIDA have begun to fund Third World NGOs directly, bypassing the normal channel in which Northern NGOs act as intermediaries between donor governments and Southern agencies. A 1985 report by the Development Assistance Committee of the OECD noted a small but rapidly growing volume of direct funding from member governments to Third World NGOs: from US$10.5 million (0.9 percent of total disbursements to NGOs) in 1980, the figure had risen to US$37.3 million (2.9 percent of total disbursements) in 1983.[23] The figure has by all indications risen even more rapidly in the past four years, and has spread to a larger number of donor countries: while the United States still accounts for the lion's share of direct funding, several other countries are also involved, including West Germany, France, Holland, the Scandinavian countries, and, to an increasing extent, Canada. Multilateral agencies such as the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) have also begun to fund Southern NGOs.

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22 PAC Statement, as amended 21 October 1986.

23 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, Development Assistance Committee (DAC), *Aid Agency Cooperation with NGOs: Note by the Secretariat*, DAC (85)2 Paris, 8 January 1985, p. 21.

Since 1973 Canadian embassies have been allocated funds (the Mission-Administered Fund, or MAF) to be disbursed on a discretionary basis to indigenous voluntary efforts and small-scale projects. These funds have grown over the years and now represent in some countries quite significant amounts, as much as $350,000 in countries like Peru or Bangladesh. As the administration of these funds grew more onerous, missions turned to locally hired staff, or even to field officers of Canadian agencies like CUSO, to facilitate the identification of worthy projects. The MAF has had the advantage of being flexible, rapid, and visible; it has also led to closer direct links between Canadian embassy officials and indigenous voluntary organizations. It was not long before CIDA began to appreciate the potential of some local NGOs to play a greater role in assisting CIDA to meet its program objectives in human resource development and related fields.

This coincided with the renewed emphasis given by CIDA's president at the time, Marcel Massé, to the social and cultural aspects of development, and the greater freedom given to CIDA project planners in the selection of delivery mechanisms. The apparent success of small-scale community initiatives of the sort preached by NGOs for so long, the evident failure of more ambitious infrastructural schemes, and frustration at the unwillingness or inability of some Canadian NGOs to boost their project funding in the manner or at the rate desired, all led CIDA to adopt direct funding of 'micro-realisations' carried out by community groups. Simultaneously, planners in the CIDA Asia Branch were attracted, not by the potential for small projects, but by the capacity of some of the larger and more experienced indigenous agencies to execute quite substantial rural development schemes. Organizations in Bangladesh (Proshika-Kendra, Proshika-Comilla), and Thailand (the Community Development Association), were seen as viable in their own right, with no need for a Canadian agency to act as an intermediary between them and the Canadian government. Similar cases of direct CIDA funding of indigenous NGOs followed with other Thai agencies and in the Philippines.

As of November 1986, there were only nine in existence, in six countries (Rwanda, Bangladesh, the Philippines, Thailand, Bolivia and Peru), but the volume of funding involved is considerable, with total project value for the nine schemes reaching almost $50 million. Individual programs range from an $8,000 grant to an indigenous NGO in Rwanda, to a three-year, $11 million program of direct funding to indigenous NGOs (as well as local government agencies and private businesses) in Negros province of the Philippines.[24] The level of funding will probably expand further in the near future, with similar initiatives being explored in other countries, including Sri Lanka, Zambia, South Africa, Jamaica and Indonesia.

[24] Letter from CIDA to CCIC dated 21 November 1986.

The implications of direct funding deserve careful reflection. Most importantly, direct funding forces indigenous NGOs into a relationship with governments, whether Northern, Southern or both. On the positive side, this could help to avoid situations in which Southern NGOs work in isolation from (or even at cross-purposes with) governmental bodies, and thus promote more effective information-sharing and replication of successful NGO projects. Yet it also entails substantial risks.

As with government funding of Canadian NGOs, the scope of direct funding could overload the administrative and managerial capacity of indigenous agencies, many of whom are small, and unfamiliar with the administrative requirements of official aid agencies. It also renders them vulnerable to funding decisions made within Northern governments' aid agencies – where they have none of the countervailing political power enjoyed by donor NGOs, and where the prospects of shared decision making are even less than in their relations with donor NGOs. Third, administrative cost constraints may lead official aid agencies to fund a limited number of relatively large programs with established agencies, rather than grappling with the more difficult task of strengthening the implementation capacity of small agencies. This, combined with government aid agencies' caution regarding the political stances of some indigenous NGOs, could drastically limit the range of agencies which governments will fund – a situation already apparent in the Philippines, where tension exists between agencies included and excluded from CIDA's direct funding schemes.

Finally, direct funding exposes local NGOs to the scrutiny of their own governments. This can lead to hostility, when the government itself is competing with local NGOs for bilateral funds needed for its own programs; it can influence projects away from basic but sensitive issues of land redistribution, or leadership training, into safer areas of service delivery; and it relies on the sensitivity, tact and political awareness of aid and embassy personnel, who may be neither familiar with nor interested in the particular circumstances and needs of local NGOs. Any of these factors could seriously weaken indigenous voluntary activity, and have repercussions lasting well beyond the current donor interest in funding Southern NGOs.

On the other hand, the attractions of direct funding, for both governments and indigenous NGOs, are undeniable. Ultimately, it is for Southern NGOs to determine the balance of risk and opportunity represented by such links, a calculation which requires greater political sensitivity and sense of strategy than can be brought to bear by most outsiders. Canadian agencies are correct to point out from their own experience the potential dangers of government funding, and the advantages of working via donor NGOs. But unless they can make a more convincing case for the alternative – by promoting more equitable sharing of responsibilities with

Southern partners, and by proving their capacity to be more than a conduit for funds – official Northern donors and Southern NGOs may increasingly see benefits in direct relationships. In an era when government funding of Northern NGOs is increasing steadily, Canadian NGOs' opposition to direct funding can easily be interpreted as a self-interested protection of their own 'turf'.

Counterpart Funding

An additional, but distinct, source of CIDA funding for NGO work is the use of counterpart funds. These are funds generated within a Southern country by the sale of Canadian commodity aid (grain, fertilizer, etc.); the proceeds, while legally belonging to the recipient country, are used for developmental activities mutually acceptable to it and the Canadian government. With Canadian commodity aid reaching 20 percent of total ODA, very substantial counterpart funds can accumulate in some countries. The attraction for CIDA officials of using counterpart funds is that, in a sense, they are 'free' – they have already appeared in the government's accounts as having been disbursed when the commodities were purchased and shipped. Spending them twice expands aid impact without any increase in CIDA's budget. In most cases (Rwanda, Burkina Faso, India, Pakistan, Tanzania, El Salvador) counterpart funds are spent through a Canadian NGO, but in some cases (Bolivia, Peru) they are going directly to an indigenous agency or group of agencies. As of November 1986, only 12 NGO projects were being funded using counterpart funds. With the exception of Francophone Africa, however, average project size is high by NGO standards (eg. $76.7 million for oilseeds development in India through the Co-operative Union of Canada, $19.5 million for social development in Pakistan, $8.9 million for indigenous voluntary activity in El Salvador through the Canadian Hunger Foundation), as is the total volume of funds involved.

Counterpart funding, at its best, is an innovative way to free up very substantial resources for socially relevant programming. In a strange reversal, one of the most criticized components of official aid – tied to Canadian goods, and sometimes determined more by domestic political or economic considerations than recipient country priorities – is harnessed to one of the most lauded, the promotion of grass-roots initiatives through NGOs. Nevertheless, counterpart funding, while in most cases not involving direct contact between CIDA and indigenous NGOs, gives rise to some of the same fears as direct funding. The criticism centres on the fact that these counterpart funds belong to the recipient country government, and therefore any use of them by indigenous NGOs requires that government's involvement and approval. In many countries this is not a problem, but in those where government policy is inimical to equitable development or popular participation, or the political climate is

highly polarized, closer government/NGO links may be counterproductive or even dangerous. In Jamaica, in 1983 to 1984 three indigenous agencies elaborated an ambitious rural development program in response to CIDA's expressed interest in supporting such a long-term, integrated scheme; when it became apparent that CIDA would only agree to finance it using counterpart funds, they withdrew their proposal, arguing that in the politically charged Jamaican environment no indigenous NGO could afford to be seen to be receiving government funds directly, regardless of the party in power. In 1986 (in a rare example of prior consultation) a meeting was held in Peru between CIDA bilateral staff and Peruvian and Canadian NGOs to explore the setting up of a $2 million fund; the response was unenthusiastic, despite the good relations which then existed with the new government, on the grounds that changes of policy (or of government) could jeopardize the long-term interests of indigenous voluntary bodies. The justness of these concerns was demonstrated when a member of the Peruvian Congress, accusing NGOs of harbouring subversive elements, launched an official enquiry into the operations of foreign and Peruvian NGOs only two months after the CIDA meeting. While none of the allegations of improper conduct could be substantiated, the enquiry exemplified the latent tension between NGOs and governments in many Third World countries.

Linkages: Beyond the Aid Relationship

As Canadian NGOs have begun to move to new relationships with beneficiary populations, some have also come to see that this can bring with it new methods of working with Canadians. Increasingly, some agencies are looking to so-called 'linkage' programs as a way of promoting a more direct link between Canadians and the people of the Third World, which emphasizes the mutual learning which can take place when communities interact as equals.

Promoting links between Canadians and the Third World is of course not new. This was always the aim of sponsorship programs, which have long recognized the desire of Canadians for direct, personal contact with people overseas. Similarly, twinning programs such as Adopt-a-Village are founded on the recognition of the need for the kind of personal contact which traditional aid projects make difficult or impossible. Recent linkage programs, however, are distinguished from earlier attempts to bridge the gap between Canadians and the Third World in that the relationship is explicitly between equals – Canadians learn from Third World communities, not just the other way around. Linkage programs inherently stress the exchange of views and experiences – as, for example, in a program linking disabled people in Kingston, Jamaica and Kingston, Ontario in order to work on income-generating programs and public policy advocacy in both countries. As a result, linkage work is geared as

much to education and action within Canada as to the support of development assistance efforts. Thus, for example, a program on women, health, and the pharmaceutical industry involves research on a broad range of issues, including the pharmaceutical industry in Canada; a program between farmers from Dominica and the Canadian Prairies examines the issues of chemical fertilizers, pesticides and herbicides in both North and South.

To date, only a few agencies have become involved in such work. For it to be successful, there must be a basis for linkage work which is relevant to both Northern and Southern groups. In some cases, this basis may be political or ideological, as with the various exchange programs linking Canadians and Nicaraguans, organized by Canadian agencies and solidarity groups, but increasingly, the basis is practical, functional exchanges between communities. An exchange between Western farmers and Nicaraguan counterparts for example, has been successful (and has endured) not solely because of political sympathies, but because of common problems faced by the two groups.

However, such programs are difficult to organize: effective linkage work demands several skills and resources which may be in short supply in some NGOs: links to Third World NGOs; well-developed information and communication structures; and, perhaps most important, a domestic base of public support interested not only in funding overseas activities, but also in exploring the global dimensions of domestic issues, and in pursuing appropriate action within Canada.[25] Linkages can work with small as well as larger agencies. The Farmers Helping Farmers group in P.E.I., for example, started when a number of Third World farm leaders attending an international consultation on the crisis of the small farm (in Canada and overseas) in 1979 were hosted by Island farm families. Exchanges of farmers took place afterward between P.E.I. and Kenya and Tanzania, in both directions, and over a quarter of a million dollars has been raised by Island farmers for small agricultural projects proposed by farmers' groups in the East African countries. As important as the financial support, perhaps, is the close relationships which have developed, and the awareness of common problems facing farmers in rich and poor countries.

Although they will at best grow slowly, linkage programs may warrant the considerable investments of time and energy required. They offer several potential advantages to Canadian NGOs. First, they are a potent means of constituency-building in Canada, providing links to new groups, such as the women's movement, farmers' associations, or labour unions. Second, they provide an opportunity to bridge the gap between overseas and dev.

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[25] See, for example, Selena Tapper, "Linkages: an unequal exchange?", *CUSO Journal* (1986), pp. 12-14.

ed. activities, both within and among agencies. And, finally, they make possible new forms of interaction between Canadian and Third World NGOs, which go far beyond mere project funding.

Conclusion

During the 1970s, the concepts of self-help and self-reliance dominated discussion of NGO programs. Clearly, however, changes in the reality of development needs often outstripped the ability of agencies to modify their programs, and many agencies continued to provide aid in ways which did not promote self-reliance. Indeed, many of the lessons of self-help have still not been totally or uniformly absorbed into NGO programming.

In the 1980s, the 'buzz-word' of the NGO community is partnership. The word captures much the same range of beliefs as the earlier emphasis on self-reliance: a faith in the capacity of people to confront their own problems; a belief in the necessity of popular participation in development; and a conviction that the role of Northern NGOs lies less in 'doing' development than in facilitating development by their Southern partners. Yet the way in which such convictions are expressed has changed dramatically. Whereas NGOs in the 1970s tended to stress the importance of small, self-supporting projects, the ethos of partnership stresses support for long-term programs, institutions, and networks. As the final chapter will point out, straightforward financial transfers may in the future be only one type of many interactions between Northern and Southern NGOs, including staff exchanges, training, and networking. And even where financial transfers remain, their form may change dramatically, with an emphasis upon program support and institution-building rather than the funding of individual projects.

As was the case with self-reliance and self-help, however, acceptance of the concept of partnership has not always been accompanied by new types of NGO activity. This is less an indication of failure on the part of NGOs, than a reflection of the difficulty of bridging the gap between the *concept* of partnership, and the reality of partnership as an organizing principle of NGO work.

Part III
Into the Future

8 Summary: Making a Difference

Those who are busy doing the urgent things rarely have time for the important things, viz. to think out the philosophical implications of their activity.

Denis Goulet, *The Myth of Aid*

A Mixed Record

Throughout this study we have used the NGOs' self-perceptions, the so-called articles of faith, as a context in which to assess their effectiveness. The answer to "how well do they measure up to their self-image?" is, on the whole, encouraging: NGOs have enlisted the support and participation of millions of Canadians for humanitarian work and international cooperation – through their education activities, project funding and direct work opportunities in Canada and overseas. In their development work overseas, as indicated in Chapter 6, they have demonstrated a generally impressive record of funding or implementing projects – usually small-scale, community-based and low-cost – which have succeeded in meeting their objectives.

In Canada, too, the non-governmental community has helped to create a climate of opinion which sees a strong, constructive role in North-South issues and a concern for international justice as a distinctively Canadian contribution to building a more equitable and peaceful world. Canadian NGOs have been in the forefront of development education, and have pioneered a variety of new approaches, ranging from the network of learner centres established in the 1970s, to more recent activities which 'link' Canadian and Third World communities and organizations.

There have been weaknesses as well. Canadian NGOs have demonstrated a concern for efficiency, for example, but this has often been defined as keeping costs low rather than efficiently using resources to maximize impact; as a result, Chapter 6 noted, the crucial tasks of staff development, project design and monitoring are often neglected. Within Canada, a competitive fundraising arena has led many NGOs to emphasize mass-marketing techniques, rather than attempting to educate Canadians in support of constructive change. Moreover, in Chapter 7, it was noted that while participation of beneficiaries in the *implementation* of NGO projects is indeed impressive, the same is not always true in the important design and evaluation phases of projects. Similarly, a significant minority of NGO projects continue to be dependent on long-term infusions of foreign funds, with limited possibilities for financial sustainability. Even more important, examples of replication or scaling-up of successful NGO efforts beyond the level of the community are few and far between.

Yet despite these shortcomings, the NGO record on the whole has been positive, and their achievements have been widely acknowledged. Donors and governments alike have increased their financial support and in recent years NGOs have been looked to as key actors in the development process. CIDA, in particular, has moved beyond its traditional 'responsive' or matching grant program to create a variety of new channels for NGO funding. As a result, the number of NGOs has continued to grow, and their level of programming has increased exponentially. As Chapter 2 noted, NGOs are no longer 'bit players' in the development game: they account for some 10 to 12 percent of official development assistance, and over 20 percent of combined public and private aid spending.

The Challenge of Impact

In short, based on the criteria of numbers of projects undertaken, range of public support or volume of government funding, Canadian NGOs have grounds for pride in their achievements. But with greater resources and higher visibility come new expectations and new responsibilities. Despite three decades of aid, conditions in many countries, especially the poorest, have worsened: the accelerating and mutually reinforcing trends of absolute poverty, environmental degradation, conflict and repression challenge NGOs to strive beyond the limited objective of project success, measured by outputs achieved, to meet the more onerous test of long-term, sustainable impact.

On the evidence of this study, meeting this challenge will require Canadian NGOs to re-examine their goals and methods, and some of their most cherished tenets. The process will raise a basic question: how relevant are the articles of faith as a guide for NGOs in meeting their present-day responsibilities?

The reality of today's development climate forces NGOs to pay more attention to the impact of their activities. The international development field has now become a marketplace, with educational institutions, commercial firms and a growing number of voluntary agencies competing for government and public support, for overseas projects, but also for information and awareness activities in Canada. In this situation, it is not enough for NGOs to protest that others are infringing on their 'turf'; they must demonstrate to government and private donors alike that their approach is effective and merits continuing support.

For NGOs the key to achieving greater impact lies in adopting a more strategic approach to their work. In part, this means remedying some of the weaknesses outlined earlier: adopting a new perspective on the relationship between costs and cost-effectiveness; building in sources of income so that projects can become self-sustaining; documenting and sharing successful experiences so that other actors in the development

field can benefit. But a strategic approach also demands that NGOs take on a new role, as catalysts to leverage the resources of institutions such as governments, media, banks or schools to bring about lasting change. This requires not just a detailed knowledge of development processes in a given country but also a wider range of skills and resources other than money.

This new role poses a challenge to organizations that have become accustomed to acting merely as financial brokers. It is a truism, though one which donor agencies naturally tend to overlook, that money is not the only solution to development problems. It is not always appropriate to work only at the grassroots – especially if there are elephants trampling the ground. There is of course a continuing need for small-scale community-based activities of the kind which NGOs have traditionally supported; indeed this is the level at which practical change and empowerment of the poor often must begin. But a strategic approach implies that it is no longer possible to isolate NGO activities from their larger political and economic contexts. Maurice Strong has pointed out, referring to recent experience in Africa:

> the root causes of the crisis are essentially systemic in nature. That is to say the cause and effect relationships take place within a complex system of interactions in which no single element can be isolated from the whole. Ignoring this simple truth is, in my view, one of the principal root causes of the failures of past development that have produced the current crisis.[1]

A strategic orientation means that NGOs must acknowledge the complexity of development and the reality of a more interdependent world, and attempt to define a relevant and distinct NGO role within this context.

There are some indications that NGOs in Canada and elsewhere are beginning to adjust to the need for a strategic orientation. Chapter 1 charted NGOs' gradual, uneven, but steady reorientation away from welfare toward a more developmental approach. A similar evolution is underway now, propelled as before by a concern to ensure longer-term impact. Indigenous development agencies in the South are often in the lead: training government extension workers in ways to reach the small farmer, facilitating access to subsidized credit for the poor, or providing legal aid and education for women, landless peasants and exploited workers; these voluntary organizations use their unique skills, contacts and information to access the greater financial resources and power of other institutions.

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[1] Maurice Strong, "Increase in Government Reliance on Voluntary Action: Crisis or Challenge?" Remarks to INTERPHIL II Conference, Venice, Italy, 26 September 1985, p. 15.

For Canadian organizations too, a similar shift is taking place. New forms of cooperation with government, the promotion of linkage activities which establish direct contacts with overseas groups tackling similar problems, and a number of interagency ventures ranging from Partnership Africa Canada to the consortium program for Mozambique all attest to an openness to new approaches. Activities such as motivating and assisting bodies like the National Farmers' Union, the Canadian Crafts Council or the Canadian Teachers Federation, as well as schools and media, to integrate a global perspective into their everyday concerns magnifies the impact of development work at home.

Relationships between Canadian NGOs and their Southern counterparts (whether direct or mediated by an international 'parent' body) with few exceptions still tend to mirror the inequity of North-South access to power and resources. Canadian agencies have argued – with some success – for greater flexibility in the terms of government funding of their own programs, but as yet they have been unwilling to provide 'core or capacity-building support to Southern NGOs, even though the weaknesses of the project format are by now well known.[2] This is not surprising; it is no easier for NGOs to share power than for other institutions, and many plausible justifications are advanced (accountability to donors, greater expertise, etc.) for maintaining the status quo.

At the same time, NGOs are beginning to define a new balance between project work overseas, building public awareness in Canada, and advocating suitable policies for a more just and sustainable future. Effective grass-roots development requires appropriate institutional and policy support; work in advocacy and education therefore are integral to project work. But the gap between NGOs primarily involved in one or other of these activities is still wide, and most will need to develop new skills in research, policy formulation and communication. Ironically, some of the factors which now make NGOs effective at the project level may constrain wider impact: a problem-solving orientation which leads to greater success in alleviating symptoms than tackling underlying causes; competitive fundraising approaches which feed on the novelty of new projects at the expense of continuity; and reliance on the use of external resources, based on what donors can command rather than on what beneficiaries can sustain.

Meeting the Challenges

What do Canadian NGOs need if they are to develop a more strategic orientation? At the most basic level, they face four key challenges.

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[2] See, for example, Bernard Lecomte, *L'aide par projet: limites et alternatives* (Paris: OECD, 1986).

Information

In Chapter 3 it was pointed out that many agencies' rely on intermediary bodies rather than on direct contact with the organizations and people with whom they are working: this weakens their understanding of Third World needs and their sensitivity to the social, political and economic context of their work. These Canadian NGOs play little or no role in project design and implementation and therefore have little opportunity to test theory against action. While a division of labour between NGOs doing fundraising and those primarily involved in project implementation has lowered costs for the former and led to efficiencies of scale, it has deprived many organizations of the 'hands-on' experience so necessary to their work.

Inadequate information has two consequences. First, it hampers an agency's capacity to place its own work in the context of broader development efforts and problems, (for example, is lobbying for debt relief for Bolivia more important than agricultural training for Bolivian peasants?). Second, it means that an organization misses lessons that would guide its future actions and enrich its capacity for educating the public.

The increasing decentralization of CIDA operations and decision making will further challenge Canadian NGOs to improve their knowledge of aid contacts in the field. The traditional argument that 'NGOs are closer to the people' will be contradicted by the reality that CIDA will have more staff operating at field level, will be able to develop closer relations with local voluntary groups, and will have more relevant and up-to-date information than many Canada-based NGOs. The implications are clear: as CIDA acquires the local knowledge and contacts and its decision-making procedures become more flexible and sensitive, it is bound to question (as will many Southern NGOs) the need to channel funds through relatively remote and uninformed Canadian organizations. Yet as Chapter 3 pointed out, the solution to Canadian NGOs' deficiency in information is not an increase in individual agency field staff, but a gradual devolution of responsibility to Southern NGOs, a process already firmly underway in most parts of the world. Though there will still be a role for individual agency staff in the short-term, and for new arrangements such as shared field staff and joint monitoring of projects, Canadian agencies should promote a more active role for their Southern partners in decision making not just regarding individual projects, but on matters of broader agency policy as well. Rather than following CIDA's lead, Canadian NGOs should build on their own strengths.

Autonomy

Closely allied to the issue of information is that of autonomy. As was pointed out in Chapter 4, the true basis of NGO autonomy rests not

merely on the freedom to carry out or fund isolated projects, but on a distinctive set of values and a unique knowledge of the authentic needs and aspirations of local people. It is in this context that the rapid increase in government funding to NGOs gives cause for concern.

The evidence gathered in the course of this study suggests that the net result of government support for Canadian NGOs to date has been mostly positive: by providing funding in a flexible and responsive manner, it has increased their capacity to pursue their own objectives, with minimal interference. Forums for sharing responsibility, ranging from CCIC's Rehabilitation and Reconstruction fund to AEA and PAC, bridge the gap between CIDA and the non-governmental community, and are serving as important learning experiences for both sides. But further increases in the level of dependence on CIDA entail a growing risk that NGOs' programming will reflect donor preferences rather than beneficiary needs, that they will become more vulnerable to policy shifts by government, and that their capacity to plan and set their own priorities will be sapped. In short, many agencies could become little more than CIDA contractors.

Ultimately government assesses development agencies in terms of their capacity to administer aid programs. This is an important part of NGOs' mission, and there is a need for agencies with the specialized skills to do it well. But the NGO community as a whole has a broader mandate – to promote development in its fullest sense; it devalues the task of NGOs to define them simply as mini-aid agencies.

A more serious consequence of the trend toward greater dependence on government arises from the fact that most of the growth in funding is in 'non-responsive' areas. From funds for country focus projects to the special funds set up for specific countries or purposes – for the Philippines, or for immunization – these constitute a hybrid 'directive/responsive' category which increasingly sets the program agenda for NGOs. Though CIDA's intentions are benign, the NGOs risk surrendering leadership rather than asserting the primacy of their own analysis of development needs. Indeed, for agencies with limited staff the effort to deal with so many distinct sets of funding criteria and procedures squeezes out any possibility of planning.

The remedy for this is a renewed emphasis on private fundraising. But this has its own risks. Competition for donor dollars, as we have seen, can encourage Madison Avenue slickness and convey an image that bears little resemblance to the real work done by an NGO. There is a very North American tendency for agencies to stress quick results, and 'success' stories in their fundraising appeals, and to measure performance by the bottom line of growth in revenue or numbers of projects supported. These are poor indicators of achievement: development, especially when it involves the poor, unorganized and powerless, is slow, unsteady and risky.

To a large degree, it is outside the control of donor agencies, especially external ones with limited influence within a poor country. Minimizing the difficulties inherent in the development process, or overemphasizing an NGO's capacity to apply a quick fix, inflates public expectations of a 'solution' to problems which are clearly long-term and intractable, and thereby contributes to what has been called 'compassion fatigue' (a more accurate description might be 'fundraising cynicism'). Overreliance on impersonal mass-marketing devices such as direct mail, especially when it plays on a sense of obligation or compassion, further exacerbates this.

Discussion of the overall funding of NGOs also raises the perennial question of the limits of their 'absorptive capacity'. Most recently, the report of the Winegard Committee referred to evidence it encountered in Africa of "the practical limitations on the ability of NGOs effectively to absorb a rapid and major expansion in funding, owing to a lack of long-term presence and experience in Africa and a shortage of managerial and administrative resources."[3] While this study supports this assessment, it is important to distinguish between different kinds of absorptive capacity: for operational agencies, the major constraint is most often the unpredictability of funding (especially where there is a high dependence on government sources) which makes increased levels of planning and personnel management impossible; for the majority of non-operational agencies, however, the chief difficulty is in identifying viable projects and Third World counterparts – when the sheer pressure to spend money can overwhelm fundamental development considerations.

The conclusion of the Winegard Committee is to recommend a steady growth in real terms of CIDA's responsive program, and continuing access for agencies to other channels, such as country focus. This seems sound. The former should protect NGOs' capacity to develop their own priorities and approaches, especially if it is progressively placed on a multi-year program basis for those agencies with a proven track record. The latter allows for some 'scaling-up' of projects, reflecting the fact that many Third World agencies already operate at a level which is beyond the funding capacity of all but the largest Canadian organizations. It is imperative, of course, that CIDA maintain a sound upper limit upon the growth of non-responsive funding so as not to swamp NGOs' capacity for effective management and independent decision making. But the ultimate responsibility rests with individual NGOs. They must realize that non-responsive funding is largely beyond their control and to some extent unpredictable. They need self-discipline to determine an appropriate funding 'mix' which maximizes agency results while maintaining financial independence – a decision which can perhaps better be exercised by independent boards of directors than by staff alone.

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[3] Canada, House of Commons, *For Whose Benefit?* p. 109.

Coordination

The strong links which exist between many Canadian fundraising organizations and their international affiliates, have in the past acted as a barrier to inter-agency collaboration among Canadian-based agencies. For many organizations, also, there is a pervasive concern that coordination would involve a loss of autonomy or a submerging of individual identity which could eventually lead to lower public visibility and support. Furthermore, the widespread predilection – almost amounting to an ideology – for smallness, contributes to isolationism. The preference for smallness arose out of the traditionally limited resources of most NGOs and as a reaction against the large-scale and capital-intensive projects favoured by government-to-government assistance. But for some, smallness has become virtually an end in itself. Today, even though the resources of individual agencies are still limited, the collective strength and potential impact of the NGO community as a whole is far from negligible. By persisting in seeing their interventions as 'small', NGOs excuse themselves from the responsibility that comes from being taken seriously; they may choose to remain marginal partly out of a justifiable suspicion of power and of those who wield it; but partly – for some – it is out of a desire to remain unsullied by the real-life compromises and conflicts which are inevitable when dealing with the use and allocation of resources.

Gradually, a concern for efficiency is promoting more inter-agency collaboration. Joint programs, such as Solidarité Canada Sahel or the South Asia Partnership, owe much to the incentive provided by generous CIDA funding; however they are proving to be rich fields for experimentation – in shared decision making, greater integration of project funding and domestic education, and more involvement of Third World people in the deliberations of Canadian NGOs. There are still many areas of improvement possible, of course, and one or two early evaluations have indicated the danger that individual agencies are slackening in their responsibilities for project monitoring and quality control. Several innovations are now coming from inter-agency coalitions, probably because of the relatively greater flexibility of their funding criteria as well as the inter-agency synergy which they generate. It may be debatable whether joint CIDA-NGO funding mechanisms, such as Africa Emergency Aid or the CCIC-managed Rehabilitation and Reconstruction fund, are less costly than regular internal CIDA administrative processes, but it is clear that they offer much greater opportunity for NGO learning and for the growth of a sense of 'collective responsibility' for work funded or carried out by Canadian agencies.

It is also increasingly important for individual NGOs to ensure that their programs are coordinated as far as possible with the activities of other actors and institutions. Coordinating programs, and designing projects to fit into local development priorities, need not lead to NGOs subordinating

their principles or independence of action. The historic preference for independent action, which has at times verged on isolationism (some governments might say anarchy), must be balanced by the need to tap the resources of larger institutions and to integrate specific activities into regional and national plans.

Management

Staff of Canadian NGOs, by and large, no longer regard 'management' with suspicion as a threatening concept embodying notions of hierarchy or technocratic efficiency inimical to their own values. Yet many agencies continue to mistake weak management for 'flexibility' and show a predilection for what has been called an "organizational culture of crisis management."[4] Inadequate planning is explained away by the unpredictability of needs, especially relating to emergencies, and – even more so – by the uncertainties of funding.

A more competitive environment, along with the increased accountability which accompanies substantial government funding, is placing a premium on effective management. The challenge facing NGOs is to develop a style of management which reflects their unique philosophy. Too often, as was noted in Chapter 5, 'professionalism' is confused with what is in reality simply a technocratic orientation marked by the squeezing out of volunteers by development 'experts'. A relevant definition of 'professionalism' for NGOs is one which promotes effectiveness and efficiency and at the same time enhances participation, the sharing of information, and flexibility. The contradiction between a participatory program philosophy and an authoritarian management style creates difficulties for voluntary organizations. While encouraging participation may be more difficult – and undoubtedly requires different management tools – than a more technocratic approach, it is central to a development agency's capacity to extend participation overseas and foster cooperation at home. And while participation, (as was pointed out in Chapter 7) is not always a condition of success for development projects, it is often the key to long-term sustainability. This is true for voluntary organizations as well.

Creative Change?

As NGOs become more prominent they lose the 'security of obscurity' which has sometimes protected them in the past; the media, politicians, and others will be quick to identify mistakes and weaknesses, just as they have been with official aid agencies. Demands for greater accountability

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[4] See Piers Campbell. "Overview of NGO Management Issues," in *NGO Management and Training: Recent Experiences and Future Possibilities*, Report on a Seminar for Southeast Asia, Tagaytay City, Philippines, 18-23 January 1987, p. 20.

and more thorough scrutiny will grow. The effectiveness of their work and the support of the public together justify the contribution made by government to NGOs; the loss of either or both of the former would inevitably entail loss of the latter. Thus the key to the continuing health and vitality of the voluntary sector is in the constant effort to enhance agency effectiveness, rather than in promoting an appealing public image or cultivating government support.

This study has argued that many factors are forcing a radical redefinition of the role of Canadian NGOs in development. A more strategic orientation will exploit their unique skills, experience and capabilities, and enhance their contribution to building a more just and humane world. This shift in approach, like the earlier shift from relief to development, has implications for NGO thinking and programming. It is likely to be characterized by a new division of labour between Northern and Southern NGOs, a more integrated linking of grass-roots activities with macro-level policy interventions, and the development of a variety of new skills. It will require better feedback mechanisms, improved communications, and an ability for NGOs to learn from their own experience. Except where governments are anti-developmental or repressive, it will result in a variety of new forms of collaboration, recognizing that development problems cannot be solved in the aid ghetto. The shift confronts Canadian NGOs with a huge challenge. Are they capable of making such changes?

Paradoxically, some of the weaknesses of Canadian agencies make them in some ways particularly well-placed for such a shift. Because they lack extensive hands-on project management experience, they have less invested in terms of people and expertise in maintaining a direct operational role than do, for example, U.S. voluntary organizations. They are already accustomed to seeking suitable Third World NGOs to implement projects or for other forms of collaboration. In some cases they also have considerable experience in mobilizing support for non-project work such as international lobbying efforts or domestic education and advocacy. But to meet the new challenge for change, great flexibility will be needed.

NGOs have always regarded themselves as flexible, and are often so regarded by others. In truth, however, that flexibility may be more a characteristic of the NGO community as a whole rather than of any particular organization. New agencies spring up ineluctably to give expression to new perceptions or approaches, and in turn influence existing organizations. The Canadian NGO community has become complex as individual agencies have become increasingly specialized. This should be a source of strength, allowing the diversity that ensures flexibility and adaptation to change.

The term NGO no longer refers only to constituency-based bodies such as the churches, Save the Children, or to fundraising organizations like

PLAN and CARE. Other types of NGOs have emerged. Some, which might be termed 'social entrepreneurs' (e.g., WUSC, CECI), compensate for limited fundraising capacity and constituency by competing aggressively for contracts and program opportunities, in the process developing new skills and areas of expertise. Other organizations act as catalysts, mobilizing other institutions to play a role in international development. It may be that this new diversity of approaches and strategies best provides NGOs with the capacity to adapt to the challenges they now face.

Change takes place because the inadequacy of outworn approaches, and old ways of seeing and interpreting reality can no longer be ignored. It needs a new vision to command legitimacy, and countervailing power to dislodge the status quo. That power is now represented by the growing strength of Southern NGOs, who are challenging their Northern counterparts to re-define their role and to demonstrate their relevance. Southern NGOs have more and more access to direct funding from bilateral and multilateral sources, breaking their dependence upon Northern NGOs and laying the foundations for something more akin to the real notion of 'partnership' which Northern NGOs have so often invoked. Already, some Southern NGOs are laying out their own criteria for relating to donor NGOs, including such things as evidence of accountability, relevant development skills (not simply financial brokering), setting agreed goals and mutual agreement on the respective roles each is to play in meeting them.

Canadian NGOs are not unique in having to confront increasing complexity. Barbara Ward wrote,"the chief environmental insight is that all things are linked; but if all things are linked, where is the thread which will lead us through the maze?" Freedom to experiment, to advocate currently unpopular views and to seek unconventional approaches, offer the best guarantee of finding some of the threads to weave a new and more effective development paradigm. Because such freedom is not typically found in large institutions or rule-bound bureaucracies, herein may lie the real 'comparative advantage' of the voluntary sector. The uniqueness of NGOs rests less in their capacity to fund isolated projects than in their potential for turning the current – and failing – model of development upside down (which is to say, right side up): transferring its focus from the exclusive right of governments to set priorities and allocate resources, to that of the rights of people, individually and collectively, to determine and act on their visions for the future, in short, to democratize development.

It is sometimes difficult for governments to distinguish between the interests of the state and those of the regime in office: by offering the advantages of pluralism, decentralization and responsiveness, NGOs can

have a corrective function, not substituting for governments but helping to ensure their accountability.

There is no single path to the future. It is the mission of development agencies to give form and focus to human hopes for change: how they translate idealism into strategy will determine their continued relevance.

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Appendices

1 *Questionnaire Respondents*

Action Matadi-Luozi Inc. *Alma, Québec*
Adventist Development and Relief Agency *Oshawa, Ontario*
African Medical and Research Foundation *Pickering, Ontario*
Aga Khan Foundation Canada *Toronto, Ontario*
Arusha Centre *Calgary, Alberta*
Assistance médicale internationale *Montréal, Québec*
Association of Kinsmen Clubs *Cambridge, Ontario*
Association québécoise des organismes de coopération internationale *Montréal, Québec*
Barbara Ward Centre *St. Paul, Alberta*
Call of the Poor *St. Norbert, Manitoba*
Canada-Caribbean Central America Policy Alternatives *Toronto, Ontario*
Canada World Youth *Montreal, Quebec*
Canadian Association for Ethiopian Jews *Toronto, Ontario*
Canadian Baha'i International Development Services *Ottawa, Ontario*
Canadian Baptist Overseas Mission Board *Toronto, Ontario*
Canadian Crossroads International *Toronto, Ontario*
Canadian Friends Service Committee *Toronto, Ontario*
Canadian Home Economics Association *Ottawa, Ontario*
Canadian Hunger Foundation *Ottawa, Ontario*
Canadian Jesuit Missions *Toronto, Ontario*
Canadian Labour Congress *Ottawa, Ontario*
Canadian Lutheran World Relief *Winnipeg, Manitoba*
Canadian National Institute for The Blind *Toronto, Ontario*
Canadian Organization for Development Through Education *Ottawa, Ontario*
Canadian Organization for Rehabilitation Through Training *Montreal, Quebec*
Canadian Red Cross Society *Toronto, Ontario*
Canadian Save the Children Fund *Toronto, Ontario*
CARE Canada *Ottawa, Ontario*
Carrefour Canadien International *Montréal, Québec*
Carrefour International *Montréal, Québec*
Carrefour Tiers-Monde *Québec, Québec*
Cause Canada *Montreal, Quebec*
Centre amistad de solidarité international de la région de l'Amiante *Thetford Mines, Québec*
Centre canadien d'études et de coopération internationale *Montréal, Québec*
Centre de solidarité internationale *Alma, Québec*
Centre d'information et de documentation sur le Mozambique et l'Afrique australe *Montréal, Québec*
Centre de solidarité internationale *Alma, Québec*
CESO *Toronto, Ontario*
Christian Children's Fund of Canada *Toronto, Ontario*
Christian Farmers Federation of Alberta *Edmonton, Alberta*
Christian Missions in Many Lands Canada Inc. *Toronto, Ontario*
Christian Reformed Work Relief Committee of Canada *Burlington, Ontario*
Citizens for Public Justice *Toronto, Ontario*
Club 2/3 Inc. *Montréal, Québec*

Collaboration santé internationale *Québec, Québec*
Compassion of Canada *London, Ontario*
Comité de solidarité de Tiers Monde *Trois Rivières, Québec*
Coopération nord-sud en éducation *Montréal, Québec*
Co-operative Union of Canada *Ottawa, Ontario*
CREDI-Lanaudière *Joliette, Québec*
Crossroads Christian Communications *Toronto, Ontario*
CUSO *Ottawa, Ontario*
Developing Countries Farm Radio Network *Toronto, Ontario*
Development Education Centre *Toronto, Ontario*
Development Education Co-ordinating Council of Alberta *Calgary, Alberta*
Development Education Program, Centre for International Programs, University of Guelph *Guelph, Ontario*
Disabled Peoples International *Winnipeg, Manitoba*
Emmanuel International *Stouffville, Ontario*
Energy Probe *Toronto, Ontario*
Entraide Missionaire Inc. *Montréal, Québec*
Ethiopia Airlift/Adopt-a-Village *Halifax, N.S.*
Federated Women's Institute of Canada *Ottawa, Ontario*
Fondation Jules et Paul-Emile Léger *Montréal, Québec*
Fondation de la Salle *Lachine, Québec*
Fondation TAB, Inc. *Lac St. Jean, Québec*
Foster Parents Plan of Canada *Toronto, Ontario*
Global Ed-Med Supplies (Canada) Inc. *Toronto, Ontario*
Global Village (Nanaimo) *Nanaimo, B.C.*
Horizons of Friendship *Cobourg, Ontario*
Institute for Development Education Through the Arts *Ottawa, Ontario*
Institute for the Study and Application of Integrated Development *Toronto, Ontario*
Inter Pares *Ottawa, Ontario*
Inter-Church Committee on Human Rights in Latin America *Toronto, Ontario*
Inter-Church Fund for International Development *Toronto, Ontario*
Inter-Cultural Development Education Association *Winnipeg, Manitoba*
International Association for the Transformation of Man *Victoria, B.C.*
International Centre, Queen's University *Kingston, Ontario*
International Child Care (Canada) Inc. *St. Catharines, Ontario*
International Defence and Aid Fund For Southern Africa *Ottawa, Ontario*
International Development Education Resource Association *Vancouver, B.C.*
International Development Office, Association of Universities and Community Colleges *Ottawa, Ontario*
International Education Centre, Saint Mary's University *Halifax, N.S.*
JMJ Children's Fund of Canada Inc. *Ottawa, Ontario*
Jeunesse du Monde *Québec, Québec*
The Leprosy Mission of Canada *Don Mills, Ontario*
London Cross-Cultural Learner Centre *London, Ontario*
Manitoba Council for International Cooperation *Winnipeg, Manitoba*
Manitoba Interchurch Committee for World Development Education *Winnipeg, Manitoba*
The Marquis Project *Brandon, Manitoba*
Mennonite Central Committee (Canada) *Winnipeg, Manitoba*
Mission Aviation Fellowship *Guelph, Ontario*
One Sky The Saskatchewan Cross-Cultural Centre Inc. *Saskatoon, Saskatchewan*
Operation Eyesight Universal *Calgary, Alberta*
Organisation canadienne pour la solidarité et le développment *Montréal, Québec*

Organization for Co-operation in Overseas Development *Winnipeg, Manitoba*
Overseas Missionary Fellowship *Toronto, Ontario*
OXFAM-Canada *Ottawa, Ontario*
OXFAM-Québec *Montréal, Québec*
Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada *Toronto, Ontario*
Plan NAGUA *Charlesbourg, Québec*
Plenty Canada *Lanark, Ontario*
Presbyterian World Service and Development Committee *Don Mills, Ontario*
Pueblito Canada *Toronto, Ontario*
Rotary Clubs of Canada *Guelph, Ontario*
The Salvation Army *Toronto, Ontario*
Saskatchewan Council for International Cooperation *Regina, Saskatchewan*
Save a Family Plan/St. Peter's Seminary *London, Ontario*
Save The Children Fund of British Columbia *Vancouver, B.C.*
Secours aux lépreux (Canada Inc.) *St. Laurent, Québec*
Service Monde-Ami *Montréal, Québec*
Seva Service Society *Vancouver, B.C.*
SIM Canada *Scarborough, Ontario*
Sir Edmund Hillary Foundation *Toronto, Ontario*
SOPAR *Gatineau, Québec*
SOS Canada *Ottawa, Ontario*
South Pacific Peoples Foundation of Canada *Victoria, B.C.*
South Saskatchewan Committee for World Development *Regina, Saskatchewan*
Terre des Hommes *St. Laurent, Québec*
Third World Resource Centre *Windsor, Ontario*
Tibetan Refugee Aid Society *Vancouver, B.C.*
Tools for Peace *Ottawa, Ontario*
Unisphere Learner Centre *Medicine Hat, Alberta*
United Church of Canada *Toronto, Ontario*
USC Canada *Ottawa, Ontario*
Victoria International Development Education Association *Victoria, B.C.*
World Citizens Learner Centre *Lethbridge, Alberta*
World Federalists of Canada *Ottawa, Ontario*
World Food Day Association *Ottawa, Ontario*
World University Service of Canada *Ottawa, Ontario*
World Vision of Canada *Mississauga, Ontario*
YMCA: National Council of YMCAs of Canada *Ottawa, Ontario*
Young Women's Christian Association of Canada (YWCA) *Toronto, Ontario*

Note: Four organizations (Association of Canadian Community Colleges, Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada, Canadian Home Economics Association, and Canadian Labour Congress) responded to the questionnaire, but were excluded from our analysis of responses, as they did not meet our working definition of NGOs.

2 *Overseas Projects Visited*

Country/Project Name	Implementing Agency(ies)	Sponsoring Agency(ies)
Bangladesh		
Rangpur-Dinajpur Rehabilitation Service	Lutheran World Service	Canadian Lutheran World Relief (CLWR)
USC Bangladesh Program	USC	USC
Bangladesh Agricultural Development	Mennonite Central Committee (MCC)	MCC Canada
Banchte Shekha	Banchte Shekha	CUSO/Inter Pares
Nijera Kori Rural Development	Nijera Kori	Inter Pares
Rural Maintenance Program	CARE	CARE Canada
Support for Indigenous Projects	South Asia Partnership	Various
Burkina Faso		
Ruralisation Ouagadougou	Union des professeurs et agents burkinabé de l'économie familiale	OXFAM-Québec
Aménagement de puits	Sahel Solidarité	OXFAM-Québec
Unité mécanique, Alga	Commission diocésaine d'activité sociale de Ouahigouya	Fondation Léger
Haiti		
Développement communautaire Pignion	Christian Reformed World Relief Committee (CRWRC)	CRWRC Canada
Développement rural intégré	MCC	MCC Canada
Production de cacao, Grande Rivière du Nord	Mennonite Economic Development Associates (MEDA)	MEDA
Centre médico-social de Brooklyn	Centre médico-social de Brooklyn	Foundation Léger, Collaboration Santé Internationale, Foster Parents Plan of Canada

Country/Project Name	Implementing Agency(ies)	Sponsoring Agency(ies)
Projets communautaires, Aquin	Soeur Pauline Landry	Club 2/3 Inc.
Institut Ophtalmologique, Les Cayes	Institut Ophtalmologique	Operation Eyesight Universal, Fondation Roncalli
Projet sanitaire	Rotary Clubs/UNICEF	Canadian Rotary, Canadian UNICEF Committee
Développement communautaire, Eben Ezer	Communauté d'Eben Ezer	Christian Children's Fund
Développement communautaire, Croix des Bouquets	National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is	National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is
Développement communautaire, St-Michel	Centre d'études et de coopération internationale (CECI)	CECI
Jamaica		
Grant's Bailey Rural Development	Emmanuel International	Emmanuel International
St. Matthew's Small Business Development	MEDA	MEDA
Rural Outreach for the Blind	Jamaica Society for the Blind	Canadian National Institute for the Blind
Jamaica-Canada Grain Cereal Project	Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA)	ADRA Canada
St. Catherine Rural Development	Canadian Save the Children Fund (CANSAVE)	CANSAVE
Integrated Community Development	Brothers of the Poor	Jamaica Self-Help
Primary Textbook Project	Canadian Organization for Development through Education (CODE)	CODE
Jamaica Integrated Community Development	Plenty Canada	Plenty Canada

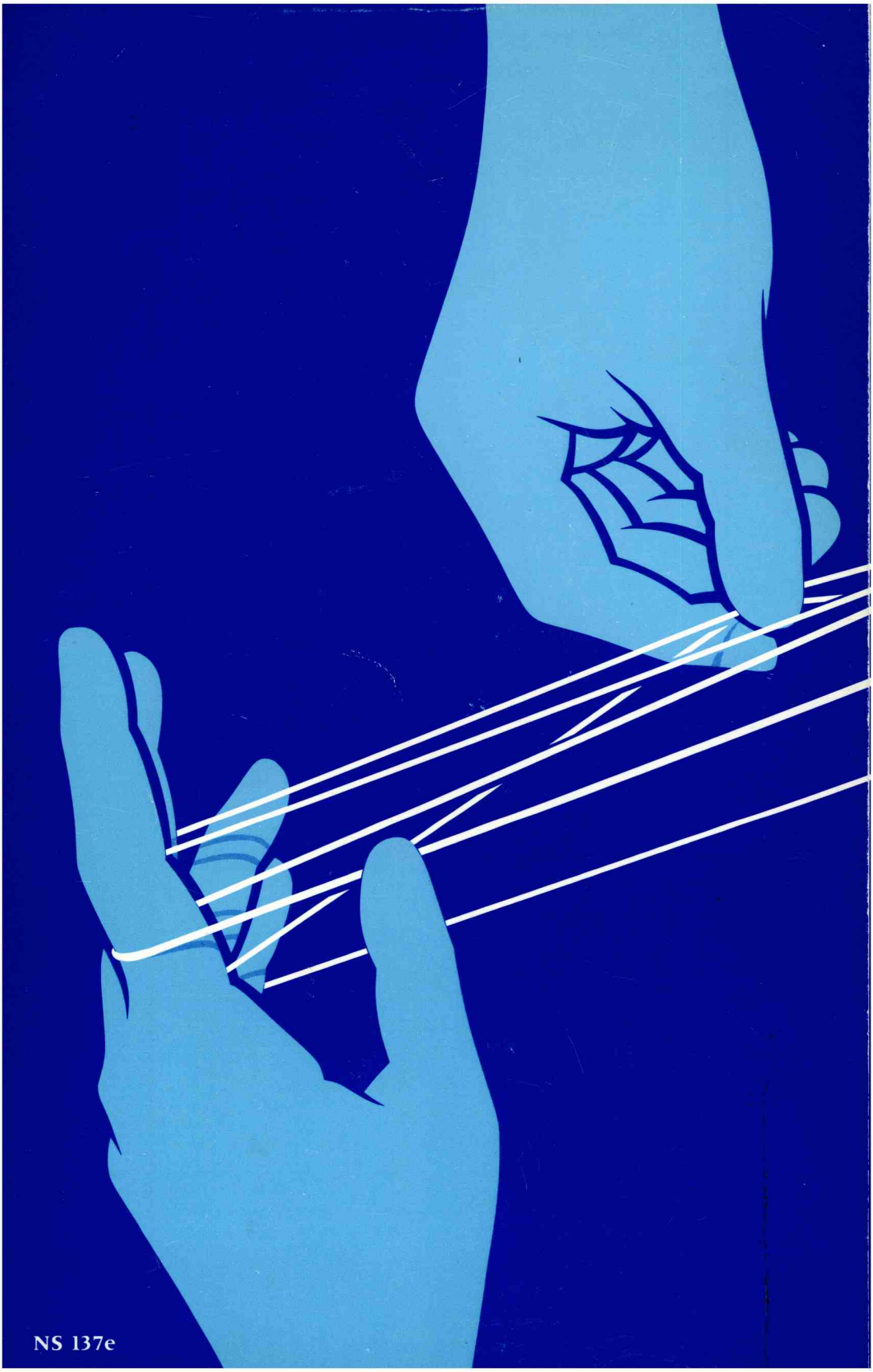
Country/Project Name	Implementing Agency(ies)	Sponsoring Agency(ies)
Popular Theatre	Sistren	CUSO, OXFAM-Canada, Inter Pares, Canadian Catholic Organization for Development and Peace (CCODP), United Church of Canada, MATCH International
Mali		
Fabrique de savon, Kangaba	Foster Parents Plan (PLAN)	PLAN Canada
Project audio-tech, Kangaba	PLAN	PLAN Canada
Aménagement des plaines, Fondibi	Euro-Action Acord	Inter Pares
Programme d'alphabétisation, Gao	Euro-Action Acord	Inter Pares
Riziculture, Gargourra	World University Service of Canada (WUSC)	WUSC
Développement rural integré du Kaarta	CECI	CECI
Peru		
Comercialización de Granos Andinos	Peru-Mujer	CANSAVE
Casa Campesina	Centro Bartolome de las Casas	Inter-Church Fund for International Development (ICFID), CCODP
Handicraft Production	Movimiento Manuela Ramos	MATCH International
Integrated Services for Children & Families, Lima	UNICEF	Canadian UNICEF Committee
Programa de Participación y Promoción Económica	Asociación Cristiana de Jóvenes de Lima	Cambridge YMCA/National Council of YMCAs
Irrigation Canals/Rural Potable Water	CARE-Peru	CARE Canada
Lima Job Creation	Acción Cristiana Unida para el Desarrollo (ACUDE)	World Concern
Lima Water Supply	WUSC	WUSC

Country/Project Name	Implementing Agency(ies)	Sponsoring Agency(ies)
Artificial Insemination Extension Program	Instituto Rural Valle Grande	Canadian Hunger Foundation (CHF)
Integrated Rural Development Cajamarca	CUSO	CUSO
Zimbabwe		
Credit Programme for Women's Groups	Zimbabwe Women's Bureau	CUSO, CHF, CCODP, MATCH International
Organisation of Rural Associations for Progress (ORAP)	ORAP	OXFAM-Canada
Cooperative Education Project	Zimbabwe Project Trust (ZIMPRO)	CUSO, OXFAM-Canada
Mechanics' Training	Organization of Collective Cooperatives in Zimbabwe (OCCZIM)	CUSO, OXFAM-Canada
Community Development	Christian CARE	Anglican Church of Canada
Teacher Training	WUSC	WUSC

Note: Several small projects supported by South Asia Partnership member agencies were visited; because research did not focus on a single project, the SAP projects are not included in the 51 projects formally analyzed in this report. They did, however, form part of our background research, as did interviews with other indigenous and donor NGOs in all the countries.

3 *Development Education Agencies Interviewed*

Arusha Centre *Calgary*
Canada-Caribbean Central America Policy Alternatives *Toronto*
Canadian Catholic Organization for Development and Peace *Montreal, Toronto*
Canadian Red Cross Society *Toronto, Vancouver*
CARE Canada *Ottawa*
Carrefour de Solidarité Internationale *Sherbrooke*
Carrefour Tiers-Monde *Québec*
Centre d'information et de documentation sur le Mozambique et l'Afrique australe (CIDMAA) *Montreal*
Club 2/3 Inc. *Montreal*
Common Heritage Programme *Ottawa*
Coopération Nord-Sud en Éducation *Montreal*
CUSO *Ottawa*
Development Education Centre (DEC) *Toronto*
Entraide Missionnaire *Montreal*
GATT-Fly *Toronto*
Global Community Centre *Waterloo*
Hope International *Vancouver*
Inter Pares *Ottawa*
Inter-Church Committee for Human Rights in Latin America (ICCHRLA) *Toronto*
International Defence and Aid Fund for Southern Africa (IDAFSA) *Ottawa*
Latin American Working Group (LAWG) *Toronto*
The Marquis Project *Brandon*
Mennonite Central Committee Canada (MCCC) *Winnipeg*
OXFAM-Canada *Ottawa*
St. John's OXFAM Committee *St. John's*
South Saskatchewan Committee for World Development *Regina*
Ten Days for World Development *Toronto*
Victoria International Development Education Association *Victoria*
World Food Day Association of Canada *Ottawa*
Young Women's Christian Association of Canada *Toronto*



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